ZATAHRA;

OR,

THE SORCERESS OF BRUSSELS.

SOUTHPORT:
Printed by Robert Johnson, 149, Lord Street.

ZATAHRA;

OR,

The Sorceress of Brussels.

A METRICAL TALE.

BY

The Authoress of "Imogine."

LONDON:
S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO., 9, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1872.

PREFACE.

THOUGH the title of the present volume may appear somewhat sensational,—yet, the Authoress trusts that—upon perusal—it will be found to "speak the words of soberness and truth," being written on the same principles, and with the same object, as her former work—"Imogine."

In reference to the scenes represented to have taken place in the cave of Zatahra, the Authoress may be allowed to remark, that the subject of the continued existence of witchcraft, is one on which a diversity of opinions has long been held: some thinking that it was banished from the earth after our Lord's ascension, while others believe that it is

still practised, though in rare instances, and in a modified form. Those who maintain the latter opinion, may justly urge, in its defence, the mention made of witchcraft in the Acts of the Apostles, and in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, where it is classed among those works of darkness, which Christians are called upon to renounce; for why should the Apostle have warned his followers against a sin which was no longer practicable?

Most of—if not all—the short Poems, placed at the beginning of the Cantos, have been already published by the Authoress in a desultory form.

September 1872.

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CANTO I.

THE DESERTED CASTLE.

Holly bright, that ne'er forsakes us,
  Thou art like the faithful few,
Who, when sorrow's day o'ertakes us,
  Still are constant, kind, and true.

When the wintry clouds are pending,
  In thy robe of glossy green,
'Mid the chilling snows descending,
  Still thou wearest an air serene.

In the evenings, calm, though darkling,
  Listening to the robin's lay,
Oft I see the frost-gems sparkling
  On thy brave and thorny spray.

While thy berries, brightly gleaming,
  'Mid the cheerless, leafless gloom,
Seem like hope's fair visions beaming
  O'er the darkness of the tomb,

Those fair visions shall refresh us
  On the day—all days above—
Fraught with memories, ever precious,
  Of the Saviour's matchless love.

Then, thy boughs the stately dwelling,
  And the cottage shall adorn,
And where joyful anthems swelling,
  Hail the sacred Christmas morn.

THE PET OF THE ARK.

Gentle bird! my Sire's decree
Hath pronounced thou shalt be free.
In this refuge, lone, yet blest,
Thou hast been a cherished guest,
Ever fluttering by my side,
All thy little wants supplied.
Dost thou raise thine eye to tell
Thou dost love thy mistress well,
Yet, would fain be soaring high
'Mid the bright blue summer sky?
Does thy harmless bosom pine
For the olive and the vine?

Verdant bower and leafy grove,
Where thou once wert wont to rove.
Ah! how little dost thou know,
What a scene of fearful woe
These sad eyes were doomed to see,
When that world, so fair to thee,
Sunk beneath its righteous doom,
And became its children's tomb.
Sights of horror and despair!
Shrieks of woe, that rent the air:
Can I e'er forget the scene?—
Haunting e'en my nightly dream—
(Though the ark securely rode
On the bosom of the flood.)
But I must not thee detain,
For the window's open pane
Thy quick eye too well doth see,
Waking thoughts of liberty.
Go,—but should'st thou fail to find
Food and harbour to thy mind,—
If thou can'st not make thy nest
On the rugged rock's rude breast,
Nor (though pinched with hunger) stay
On the vulture's fare to prey,—
Homeward speed thy rapid flight—
I will hail thee with delight.
And, if haply should be seen
Some few leaves of pallid green,

Bear the trophy in thy beak,
To our drooping hearts 'twill speak,
Like returning mercy's voice,
Bidding them again rejoice.
Ah! thou flutterest!—thou art gone
To yon dreary world alone,
And I gaze with tearful eye,
While (a speck upon the sky)
Still thy little form I view.
Now 'tis gone;—sweet bird adieu!
Awful waters—deep and high—
Dismal wrecks—still floating by—
Ye remain to greet my sight,
Day by day, and night by night.
O! that gracious heaven would deign
On its work to smile again,
And in mercy to restore,—
Ne'er to bear its vengeance more.

O! what a scene of desolation grand,—
Of awful beauty and of splendour drear—
Must the returning sun each day have seen,
Glistening beneath his bright refulgent beams,
When, from the fearful deluge, which interred
A guilty world beneath its waters deep,

The rocks and mountain-tops first raised their heads,
Upon whose sides, perchance, at intervals
Green spots—the power of vegetable life
Revealing—would (oasis-like) appear.
Was it from such the little wanderer plucked
The verdant leaf, which in its beak it bore
To glad the lonely tenants of the ark?
Prisoners of mercy and of hope were they,
Whose eyes—though grieved such sights of woe to see—
Would oft be raised in thankfulness to Heaven,
Whose gracious warnings—faithfully believed—
Proved their deliverance from the general doom.
The little, by imaginative power,
Oft shadows forth the great. And thoughts like these
Rose to the mind of Furgus Brieton,
As on his flooded land he sadly gazed
At the grey dawn of day, ere yet the sun
Had shed its cheering beams upon the earth.
'Twas situate in a part of Ireland,
Where, when the heavy rains continuous fell,
Calamitous results, at times, occurred.
Nor was it for himself, alone, he grieved,
As he surveyed the scene, and called to mind
The loss and misery which would accrue
To the poor peasantry who dwelt around—
Whose cabins by the waters were submerged.
Their roofs once more appeared; but what had been

Fair pasture land looked like a silvery plain
Of molten looking-glass, diversified
With trees and hedgerows green, which to the scene
An almost fairy-like appearance gave.
The flocks and herds had suffered, but he felt
'Twas matter of unfeigned thankfulness
Few human lives were lost, and (next to this)
That his old mansion, called in Ireland
A castle, had been spared; for in his eyes
That ancient half dilapidated pile
A palace seemed, for fond domestic love
Its sacred light within its walls had shed;
His forefathers (as ancient legends told)
Had dwelt therein for ages, and could claim
A Trojan chieftain as their ancestor.

'Twas Christmas time, when social life is wont
To wear an air of gay festivity,
And Brieton the season loved to keep
By hospitality, and kindly acts
Of bounty to his humble neighbours round,
Now doubly needed, by the evils dire
Resulting from the late calamity.
Before the summer months had passed away,
The waters were dried up, but from their bed
Unhealthy vapours constantly exhaled,
Which fever brought to many a cabin round,
Nor passed the castle by, for there, ere long,

Two little ones to sickness fell a prey;
And ere their mother's tears had ceased to flow,
Though oft she checked them, as she called to mind
Their happy souls (through their Redeemer's grace)
This life of sin and sorrow had exchanged
For heavenly bliss, she, too, a victim fell
To the dread malady.—Before her death,
She from her husband's lips a promise gained
To leave the fatal spot, without delay.
The bleeding heart of Brieton almost sunk
Beneath the pressure of bereavements' pang,
For he had loved his gentle partner well;
And he would wander like a spectre, lone,
Through that old mansion's sad and silent rooms.
But, to his promise true, he left the place
And chose a pleasant but retired spot,
Not far from Dublin, as his residence.
Two sons, scarce past their childhood's thoughtless days,
And Catherine, his daughter, younger still,
Were his companions; but, though feeling much
To bid adieu to his loved castle walls,
It was not with emotions of regret
He left the peasantry who round him dwelt;
For though with liberal kindness he had striven
Their woes to succour, and their wants relieve,
It seemed no sense of gratitude to wake.
They took his benefits with sullen thanks,
While in their hearts they cursed the heretic;

For priestly influence had imbued their minds
With bitter feelings of malignant hate;
For though e'en heathen moralists esteem
Ingratitude a crime of deepest dye,
Yet, Romish casuists deem it none at all,
If shewn to those without her Church's pale,
Since heresy (according to their creed)
Cancels humanity's most sacred claims.
Yet Brieton no bigotry had shewn
Towards them, for he was of that liberal school
Who bear resemblance to the little maid
In crimson hood, who (nursery legends tell)
Deluded by the crafty wolf's disguise,
Mistook it for her loving grandmamma.
Too many, with misguided charity,
Their eyes persist in closing against all
That history and experience testify
Of Rome's unchanging bigotry and hate
Towards all who dare oppose her ceaseless aim
To gain despotic power. Now Father Cain
Was a stern bigot, who had never made
Response to Brieton's overtures of peace,
Save once, when he had deigned to recommend
One of his flock (who was an orphan left)
As nursery maid in Brieton's family,
Who, influenced by compassion, and the fear
Of being charged with narrow-minded views,
Received the damsel, after promise made

She would make no attempt to draw away
His children, and pervert them to her faith.
An ignorant, well-meaning, girl was she,
Who loved his children, and to save their souls,
And please the priest she dare not disobey,
No scruple made her promise to ignore,
And satisfied her conscience with the thought
He had a dispensation given her,
And told her 'twas no sin to practise fraud,
Since faith need not be kept with heretics;
But from their parents, he his dupe enjoined
To hide her guile, and influence her charge
Like secrecy to practice. For a while
No ill results appeared; but 'tis well known
That first impressions, on the youthful mind,
A powerful influence often exercise
In after life. Perchance 'twas so with them;
For when to manhood grown, the eldest son
Formed a warm friendship with a Catholic priest,
Married his sister, and before a year
Had passed away, had joined the Romish Church.
Denis, the second, riches to obtain,
Sailed as a merchant; he was prosperous,—
At Brussels fixed his final residence,
And (like his brother) chose a Catholic bride,
Though he himself remained a Protestant,
At least in name; his heart, unhappily,
To scepticism's fatal school was given.

But to their early history to return:
The Irish maiden married e'er they left
For Dublin, and whate'er she had been taught
Soon passed away from Catherine's infant mind,
The youngest, and her father's fond delight,
Who, by her gentleness and duteous love,
Proved the bright sunbeam of his lonely age;
And as she grew, 'twas his delight to trace
Her mother's beauty, and the sprightly grace
And guileless manners which so often charm
In Erin's pleasing daughters. But, alas!
Catherine had scarcely reached her twentieth year,
Ere she was left an orphan; overwhelmed
With filial grief—and (lonely as she was)
Became prevailed on, in her brother's house
To take up her abode. It hath been told
That he was to the Church of Rome attached;
But he his sister faithfully assured
That he would never strive to interfere
With conscience's rights, but that she should enjoy
The free and unmolested exercise
Of her own faith. This promise he fulfilled.
But few can dwell 'neath Romish influence
And no injurious effects sustain.
For several months she was allowed to keep
The deep seclusion her bereavement claimed;
But ere a year had passed, her sister fair
(The lively Harriet)—though from motives kind—

Began to try persuasion's winning arts
To draw her from her mournful solitude,
And Catherine,—as time her grief subdued—
Was not unwilling to appear once more
Within the sphere of social intercourse.
During her father's life, her days had passed
Much in retirement, and, though then content,
Yet, soon accustomed to excitement's charms,
She almost seemed, like Harriet, to feel
Its presence needful to her happiness.
One circumstance her pleasure greatly marred,
Which was, that of her brother's visitors
The greater part were of the Romish faith,
(Although to her they shewed much courtesy.)
Of these was one, who bore to Harriet
A near relationship, and of the charms
Of Catherine (now in beauty's fairest bloom)
Became enamoured, though his watchful priest—
Of whom, despite of pride, he stood in awe—
Remonstrated, and warned him; but in vain.
Harriet, with secret pleasure, soon perceived
His growing passion, and encouraged it;
And he had much of that external grace
Which, when with flattering attentions joined,
But seldom fail to win, and 'twas not long
Ere Catherine a conscious pleasure felt
In his society. The days flew by,
While—happy in the present—she forgot

To look beyond it, nor e'er asked herself
To what their friendship led; or strove, perchance,
To pacify her conscience with the thought
That, as a Catholic, he could never mean
That his attentions should be serious deemed
By one belonging to the Church Reformed,
And that it would be vanity in her
To think St. Carrick aught but friendship meant.
So Catherine argued—practising, alas!
The self-deception, but too often used
When inclination is by duty crossed.

CANTO II.

THE SEVERED TIE.

"Learn to say no"—was, by the dying lip
  Of love maternal, once the counsel given.
They who possess not strength to follow it,
  Too often wander from the way to Heaven;
And plunge their souls in folly, guilt, and woe,
Because they cannot firmly answer—"No."

'Tis true, the word is sometimes misapplied
  By captiousness (on contradiction bent)
Or coldly breathed by selfishness and pride,
  Or e'en to perfidy and falsehood lent;
While sordid avarice fails not to bestow
On pleading poverty—a cruel—"No."

Yet oft it acts a wise and holy part,
  When Satan, world, or flesh the soul assail,
And, like defensive armour, shields the heart,
  When their enchantments 'gainst it would prevail;
But, ah! false colours oft the trio shew,
And souls, bewildered, scarce can answer—"No."

Hard is the trial, when the friends we love,
  Regardless of the sacred laws of Heaven,
Urge us to what our conscience disapproves.
  But O! recall the Saviour's warning given,—
"Father or mother love not more than Me,"—
And let unyielding "No," thy answer be.

Should unbelief or error, fraught with pride,
  Assume philosophy's imposing claim,
Heed not, although their followers should deride
  Thy faith,—but still to thy Redeemer's Name
And cause be true, nor listen to the foe,
Though lured to join their ranks, but answer "No."

How brave the answer which the captive three
  Made to Assyria's King!—and in the time
When Pagan Rome's despotic devotees
  Demanded worship, at their idols' shrine,
Of Heaven-departed souls, how many owe
The martyr's "crown of life" to faithful "No!"

Although by love enslaved, St. Carrick saw
That many obstacles his path beset;
For he was well aware he should incur,
Not only his confessor's stern reproofs,
But the displeasure of a relative
From whom he, hitherto, had hoped to gain
No small addition to his worldly wealth,
(A circumstance he feigned not to despise)
Yet, still he was not poor; and Catherine
Had not been left an orphan portionless.
But while he hesitated to disclose
The love, which self-complacent vanity
Led him to deem rejection need not fear,
An wholly unexpected circumstance
Called him from Ireland to a distant land,
Where he might be detained for weeks or months,
And jealous fears began to haunt his mind,
Lest Catherine (if uncertain of his love)
Might to some rival be induced to lend
A favourable ear. Urged by this thought,
He made resolve, in spite of priest or friends,
To make her his betrothed before he left.
But, sooth too say, his pride was much annoyed
When, pale and startled, she his suit declined,
And told him that their difference of faith
Had raised a barrier neither ought to pass.
But when he urged that she his fond devoirs
Had, by her smiles, encouraged—nay, called forth;

And hinted it was playing the coquette,
To feed the hopes she meant to disappoint,—
Her heart misgave her, for she felt in fault.
She therefore owned (though with a crimson blush)
Her heart was not indifferent to his love;
But said, she ne'er could to his Church conform.
" It is not needful, dearest," he replied;
" Each may remain a member of the church
" In which they were baptised, yet live in peace
" And mutual love." " It may be so," she said;
" But my dear father, who could not be charged
" With bigotry, assured me that your Church
" Esteems but as heretic reprobates,
" All who are not to her communion joined,
" And holds it as a duty, where its power
" Extends, to persecute them, e'en to death."
At this home thrust, St. Carrick knit his brow;
But, soon recovering, with a forced smile,
Replied,—" You must not judge the Catholic Church
" By legends of the past; there was a time
" When e'en your own held persecution right,
" Enacting many laws intolerant.
" The mild enlightened genius of the age
" In which we live, is of another stamp;
" And e'en our Church its vigour has relaxed,—
" For though the Canon Law can never change,
" Much it enjoins now in abeyance lies;
" E'en in the days in which it was enforced,

" 'Twas not the Church that doomed the heretic
" To death or torture, but the Civil power,—
" Regardless of the Church's clemency,—
" Who frequently implored it to extend
" Forbearing mercy to the criminal—
" Although in vain." Now, Catherine was not versed
In Romish subtleties—she therefore held
Her peace; but had she, happily, possessed
The knowledge and the courage requisite,
She might have answered, that—howe'er his Church
Might act the hypocrite, 'twas too well known
Its recommending mercy to the State
Was but a form, well understood by both,
And that, though when beneath a cloud, 'twas fain
To put on toleration's gentle garb,
Whene'er to power restored, it threw aside
The false disguise, and shewed itself unchanged.
When did it e'er (though individual hearts
Deplore the crime) condemn the cruel deeds
Which " St. Bartholomew's " sad day disgraced?
Does not its silence to the world proclaim
That it approves the deed, and sanction gives
To cruel and perfidious truce-breaking,
As well as murder. But, though Catherine
(Whether a coward by love's influence made,
Or conscious sense of inability)
Proved a weak champion in her Church's cause;
Yet, urged by conscience, one last effort made,

And stated that she feared their different views
Would prove a drawback to domestic peace.
But he assured her, she should be allowed
Freedom to worship in her native Church;
Nor would he with her conscience interfere.
Then, in a gentle and assuring voice,
(Though conscious that he was deceiving her)
He added—that but little difference
Existed 'twixt the Catholic Church and hers.
" For many members of the Church Reformed
" I entertain," he said, " a high esteem,"
" And hold as Christian brethren; and for you,
" My Catherine, dear,—no difference of creed
" Can e'er affect my fond, devoted love;
" Nor can I bear the thought of leaving you,
" Without a promise that you will be mine
" When I return." What more the lover urged
Need not be told; but on the guileless heart
Of Catherine, his eloquence prevailed
To give a trembling promise to be his.
And he took care to close the interview—
Ere she had time that promise to retract,
And quitted Ireland the ensuing morn.
While Catherine (to calm reflection left)
Of self-reproaches and misgiving fears
Became, alternately, the tortured prey.
But Harriet, who had every effort used
The attachment to promote, in the fond hope

That Catherine (when St. Carrick's wedded wife)
Would soon be lured into the Church's fold,
Tried every winning art to draw her mind
From dwelling on the results of a step
As reckless as 'twas irretrievable.
Catherine, by her persuasions, had been led
To give consent the nuptials should take place
Soon as St. Carrick to his home returned,
Which, in his absence (he had orders left),
Should greatly be enlarged and beautified.
Harriet, who on herself the arrangements took,
Was all excitement; while St. Carrick penned
Those fond epistles which, in absence, feed
Love's tender sentiment! and when he came
To claim her for his own, she, in the joy
Which his return called forth, almost forgot
The fears which had before oppressed her heart.
A few days previous to the important one
Fixed for their marriage, she had been engaged
To join her friends in an excursion, planned
By Harriet, to a rural farmhouse, near;
But, by a headache seized, she was compelled
At home a lonely prisoner to remain.
St. Carrick (on a visit to a friend)
Was not expected till the ensuing day.
It was a sultry evening, and she lay
Upon a sofa, in her bower of rest,
Whose window overlooked a garden fair;

Beneath it, placed against the wall, there stood
A rustic garden seat, from which, ere long,
There rose, to her surprise, the murmuring sound
Of voices—two—in converse deep engaged.
One was St. Carrick's—who had from his friends
Before the expected time returned, but thought
That Catherine had her sister's party joined,
An having (somewhat unexpectedly)
With his confessor met, they took a stroll
Through Brieton's grounds, and paused awhile to rest
Beneath the window, in prolonged discourse.
"Think not so lightly of your fault, my son,"
Observed the priest, with stern reproving voice;
"It is no venial sin, for one like you,
"Nurtured within the bosom of the Church,
"To link himself with those it holds accursed;
"For they who, by their passions thus misled,
"Fall under influence heretical,
"Grow cold and lukewarm to their Church's cause,
"And oft apostatize."—"Nay, fear me not;"
(St. Carrick answered) "I would rather die,
"Or see my bride expiring at my feet,
"Than act the apostate's part. I hope to bring
"A wandering sheep within our Church's fold!
"Of course, I must dissemble with her now;
"But when invested with a husband's power,
"I shall expect, at least, that she will yield
"Outward conformity. I fain would try

" Persuasion's influence; but, if that should fail,
" Shall scruple not to use more stringent means."
" If you are faithful to your good resolves,
" It will be some atonement for your sin,"
(Replied the Father); " but before I grant
" The absolution which your soul requires,
" You must accept the penance I enjoin;
" And of the dowry which the maiden brings,
" Devote a portion, as an offering meet,
" To your offended Church." Now, Catherine,
When first she caught the sound of their discourse,
Had risen to close the window, well aware
They little dreamed that they were overheard;
But, ere it was accomplished, on her ear
There fell what seemed to fix her to the spot,
With spell-like power. We would not justify
The listener's part; but some excuse was hers,
For what she heard, she felt, too well, might prove
Of deep importance to her future weal.
So she was led her purpose to delay.
What portion of the fortune she might bring
Was to the Church's use to be assigned
She did not learn, for when he reached this point
The Father's voice was lowered, and both arose,
And (though conversing still) turned down a path
Which to the shrubbery led, and vanished there,
While Catherine stood transfixed! Then, on her couch,
Half-fainting, sank, o'erwhelmed with mingled grief

And indignation, at the treacherous part
St. Carrick was contemplating to act—
In spite of the assurance he had given.
"And am I doomed" (the unhappy maiden thought)
"To link my fate with one who thus repays
"My trusting heart, with falsehood and deceit?
"And secretly designs, when in his power,
"To play the tyrant's part. How can I feel—
"For one thus acting—the esteem and love,
"Devoid of which, a wife can ne'er perform
"A duteous part? Ah! no; it must not be."
But, then, before her rose the painful thought
Of what she must encounter; most of all,
She shrank from the idea of being charged
With acting the dishonourable part
Of listener. For a while the maiden mused
In sad perplexity, and saw no means
Of extrication; but at length resolved
To leave her brother's house, e'er morning came,
And fly to Brussels, where, she doubted not,
At least a present refuge to obtain
With Denis, who had long been settled there.
So, 'mid the silent hours of night, she made
Such preparations as the time allowed,—
Counted, with trembling hand, the little store
She could collect, the expenses to defray
Of her adventurous journey. Morning came,
And Harriet returned, but found her maid

In utter consternation and dismay,—
For Catherine was nowhere to be found,
Nor had she left a single line to tell
Why she had fled, nor whither she was gone.

CANTO III.

BRIETON.

MAMMON.

I dreamt that 'neath a temple fair, I stood,
  Where "Mammon"—Prince of this World—
    throned in state,
  Upon his golden coffers sat elate,
While clouds of incense sweet, before him rise,
  Adoring worshippers around him bend,
  While near him Avarice—his bosom friend
And keeper of his treasures—stood with watchful
  eyes.

His chaplet was of those bright flowers composed
  Which pay their homage to the rising sun,
  And laurels—though in fields inglorious, won
By cares that bring full many a sleepless hour.
  A magic sceptre bore he in his hand;
  But who can trace that sceptre's wide command,
Or who the secrets tell of its mysterious power?

'Neath its transforming influence, minds inert
(That seemed to objectless indifference given),
To action roused, the chains of sloth have riven,
And, toil despising, traversed land and sea
Riches to gain; alas! such little know,
Not India's wealth can chase man's birthright, woe,
Which haunts, in countless forms, his mortal destiny.

That wand, a still more fatal power exerts
O'er many a heart where generous feelings dwelt
And wont with kindly sympathy to melt,—
Which, at its touch, grow cold as chilling snows,
'Mid winter's night; while the once pitying eye
(Like the proud Levite) passes sorrow by,
Or says—"be clothed and fed," but no relief bestows.

I saw a train to Mammon's throne draw nigh,—
Some tributary offerings humbly brought,
Others his powerful assistance sought,
(But these oft met reception brief and cold.)
True patriotism sought, with earnest zeal,
Aid for his country's safety, health, and weal;
But Mammon would, for gain, his country's weal
have sold.

To make appeal against oppressive wrong,
Came Labour's children, sad (a numerous train),
Hoping, since Mammon by their toil obtained

Much of his wealth, he would their friend appear;
  But though self-interest, with counsel sage,
  Pointed to figures on statistics' page,
Scarce would the grasping tyrant to their claims give
    ear.

Two gentle forms appeared—twin sisters they—
  (Fair Piety and Charity their names)
  To plead the cause of want and woe, they came,
And those that, lost, in heathen darkness lie—
  Reminding Mammon that when life shall fail,
  No earthly riches can the soul avail,
Nor prove its passport to the realms on high.

Methought, while thus they spake, with heavenly
    grace,
  That (Felix-like) he trembled on his throne;
  But, for the present, bade them to be gone,
Saying, "I will consider of your prayer;"
  While Avarice murmured — though with bated
    breath—
  "It were some consolation, e'en in death,
To know the world would say 'he died a millionaire.'"

Yet, from his boundless store he gave a mite
  (Strange contrast to "the widow's mite"), and
    sighed.
  When lo! a form (veiled like an Eastern bride)

Appeared, and Mammon courteously bent
  An ear, as she exclaimed—" Give me, I pray,
  " Pomp, splendour, luxury, and pageants gay;
" For me thy wealth was saved, on me let it be spent."

In vain did Avarice remonstrance raise,—
  The form, imperious, her influence knew;
  And as, with air triumphant, she withdrew,
I asked of Truth (spectatress of the scene—
  Although incognita) the fair one's name,
  Who thus, from Mammon, could each wish obtain?
" 'Tis Self" (the maid replied), " his idolized Queen."

When Denis Brieton left his father's house,
Fair fortune's smile to court in foreign lands,
That father's pious counsels, in his heart
Remained a while impressed; but they who trust
Their own resolves lean on a broken reed.
Soon, through the absorbing power of worldly cares,
Prayer was neglected; and no soul can walk
In life eternal's straight and narrow way
Who slights the throne of grace. It was not long,
Ere from his soul " things present" chased the thoughts

Of "things unseen;" and when temptation came—
In all the varied and ensnaring forms
In which the world, the devil, and the flesh
So oft present it to the youthful mind—
He—like the house of which the Saviour spake,
Built on the sand—soon fell beneath its power.
Yet conscience was not seared, and he was doomed
To bear its pangs. How happy they who seek
That sovereign remedy for wounded minds
The Gospel freely offers. Brieton sought
The fatal opiate the world supplies,
Nor sought in vain, for Mammon o'er his heart
Gained, by degrees, complete ascendency.
Surrounded by the influences of Rome,
He sometimes felt inclined to join its Church,
Since 'twould his temporal interests promote,
But to its dogmas he could ne'er subscribe.
Hence, he was driven in scepticism to seek
A refuge sad, although he ne'er attained
To settled unbelief in Scriptures' truth,
But lived, like many more, with little peace
Or real enjoyment of this present world,
Yet void of all the elevating hopes,
Which cheer the Christian, of a better state.
But fortune, to his fond desire for wealth,
Propitious proved; and after migrating
To various parts, at length he settled down
At Brussels, though continuing to pursue

His worldly schemes with eager interest.
But e'en the heart, by Mammon's icy wand
Benumbed, the power of love will sometimes own,
And Brieton, of the gentle, fair Clarice,
Became enamoured, and was loved again.
Her father to the Church of Rome belonged;
But he, like Brieton, in his secret soul
For no religion cared, and was well pleased
To see his daughter give her hand to one
Of wealth possessed, although a heretic.
Clarice, more conscientious and sincere,
Some painful scruples felt; but love, combined
With deference to her father's wishes, stilled
The painful struggle in her bosom, raised
By Father Urban's stern reproving voice,
Though Brieton a solemn promise gave
(To do him justice—faithfully performed)
With her religion not to interfere,
And Father Urban, by her wish, remained
Her spiritual director, and with zeal
Sincere, though oft too harshly exercised,
From time to time, before her placed the guilt
She had incurred by this unhallowed step,
And many secret penances enjoined.
This circumstance, combined with failing health,
And the bereavement of an infant son,
Which, as a penal judgment, she was taught
By him to look upon, ere long produced

Mental depression, and Clarice became
So great an invalid, that Brieton judged
'Twere best to engage some lady who would act
The kind companion and the cheerful friend,
Nor yet object his household to o'erlook,
And play the hostess to his visitors.
It was not long before the post was filled
By one who had to Clarice long been known.
This lady, but a few years previous,
'Mid polished circles had in affluence moved,
But, by her husband—who within the verge
Of gaming's fatal vortex had been drawn—
To poverty, at length, became reduced.
While sojourning at Paris, he was found
Drowned in the river, and to dread "La Morgue"
A lifeless corpse was borne,—upon whose fate
Suspicion of a suicidal act
Too justly rested. She, a widow left,
In poverty and deep seclusion lived
For several years, but was not loth to leave
Her lonely penury for Brieton's home.
Since her misfortunes, she had given the heart
The world once filled to superstition's rule,
But from her priest (to whose advice she paid
Implicit deference) had permission gained,
For Clarice's sake, to enter Brieton's house,
Which, he remarked, "before her spread a field
"Of usefulness, in which, 'twas probable,

"She might her Church's interests promote."
But, for the present, 'twas expedient deemed
To make profession of those liberal views
Which, well she knew, that Brieton best approved:
For upright truthfulness by no means formed
A feature in the character or creed
Of Antoinette Telure. She still was young,
And, though not handsome, charming was esteemed.
Her powers of conversation, and the ease
And courteous grace which in her manners shone,
Ne'er failed to please whene'er it was her wish;
And, by her kind attentions, soon she won
Clarice's gentle heart,—and Brieton felt
Well pleased his household to consign to one
Desirous with his wishes to comply,
And who to his dependents, for a while,
Appeared all sunny affability.
But when she felt herself securely fixed,
By slow degrees the pleasing mask was dropped,
And though, apparently, she welcomed all
His friends with bland and polished courtesy,
Yet, those who to the Church Reformed belonged,
Less frequent in their visits soon became,
While Romanist acquaintanceships increased.
His English servants also disappeared,
To Brieton's chagrin. Two years had passed
Since Antoinette had entered on her post,
When Catherine, as a fugitive, forsook

Her home and native land, to shun the fate
Upon the brink of which, all unawares,
She found herself so treacherously betrayed.
With troubled mind her journey she pursued,
And crossed the sea in safety, though in fear,
And 'midst the hurry and confusion dire
Which travelling attends, was forwarded
To where she had been told the nearest line
To Brussels lay,—but grievous was the shock
Her mind sustained, when first the startling fact
Became apparent that a pocket-book—
Which had contained part of the little store
Collected for her flight—had been purloined,
Or, in her agitation, left behind;
What in her purse remained had but sufficed
To pay the vehicle that brought her there.
Her fainting heart with fear and anguish sunk
As to herself she said—" And must I, then,
" Roam, like some wretched outcast, through the
streets
" The livelong night?—No! better far appeal
" E'en to the charity of stranger hearts."
So Catherine thought, for she was ignorant
Of the world's wicked ways, and little knew
The cruel misconstruction which it puts,
Too oft, on inexperienced innocence.
She, therefore, made resolve that she would tell
Her sad dilemma, and assistance crave;

Though, 'mid the various groups that now began
To gather in the station, she could see
No female forms, save of the humble class,
To whom, she felt, 'twere useless to apply
For aid pecuniary; yet, she shrank
From making to the other sex appeal,
And nearly hesitated till too late:
But terror seized her when she saw the train
For Brussels was arrived, and soon must start.
She cast a timid, furtive glance around,
And saw a stately form still lingering,
Who looked, she fancied, like an Englishman,
And on whose countenance, though somewhat stern,
There beamed a look benevolent and kind;
So—though in accents faint and tremulous—
She told him her sad loss, with artless grace.
The stranger listened, with a courteous look
Of kindly interest, for in her voice,
Her countenance and manner, there was that
Which brought conviction of her truthfulness,—
And Reginald Bellairs would not have turned
From her appeal, e'en had the speaker been
Homely and plain, instead of passing fair.
"Lady," he gently said, "if thou wouldst tell
"Thy brother's name, and where he may reside,
"I, to his mansion, could convey thee, safe,
"For I am bound for Brussels." But a smile
Came o'er his countenance, when from her lips

He learnt that Brieton was the kinsman sought.
"Your brother's habitation," he replied,
"Is not unknown to me, nor yet his name."
He paused, as he observed that Catherine's cheek
Grew red and pale by turns, for o'er her mind
There flashed the thought, how strange it must appear
When she acknowledged that her relatives
Of her arrival had not been apprised.
So Reginald Bellairs was left to guess
Some mystery, she chose not to explain,
Was to her present history attached.
Though much surprised, yet Brieton and Clarice
Kindly received their unexpected guest,
And to the stranger courteous thanks expressed.
Soon as they were alone, the maiden told
The painful reasons for her hurried flight,
Which he, at least, approved, requesting her,
Long as she pleased, to make his house her home—
An offer gratefully by her received;
Nor did she fail to render thanks to heaven
For her deliverance from the fatal snares
Which Romish guile so artfully had spread.
Yet still that sense of desolation sad
Oppressed her heart, which love must ever feel
When from their pedestals its idols fall.
But as, with time, her sorrow wore away,
The lively scenes of Brussels pleased her well;

Its splendid squares, its walks, and gardens fair,
Replete with much the fancy to delight,
Assisted to dispel the gloom of thought.
Clarice, by nature kind and amiable,
In Catherine soon a sister's interest took,
Whose heart returned it with responsive warmth;
But, ere the bud of friendship could expand,
'Twas withered by the evil influence
Of Antoinette, who though, at first, she hid
Aversion 'neath a smiling countenance,
In the vain hope she might, perchance, succeed
In luring Catherine to the Church of Rome,
No kindly feelings towards her entertained:
For she was jealous lest her influence
With Clarice, with her own might interfere.
And when she found the youthful heretic
Was proof 'gainst every effort she could use
Her mind to pervert, hatred filled her breast,
And she resolved, if possible, to sow
The seeds of discord 'twixt the relatives.
Now, Catherine had shrunk instinctively
From one whose character, she felt assured,
Was wanting in sincerity and truth,
And much suspected secret enmity
Was lurking in her heart; yet, 'twixt the pair,
Appearances were for a while preserved.
But Antoinette, ere long, contrived to work
Upon the timid mind of poor Clarice—

To think herself a serious invalid,
Who to her chamber should confine herself,
While Antoinette, with the self-sacrifice
She could so well assume, spent many hours
With the poor hypochondriac, but the door
On others closed; and even Catherine
Admittance sought in vain, for she was told
The invalid was seriously engaged
In pious converse, or required repose.
Denis, though kind, was far too much engaged
In his pursuits to give much time or thought
To Catherine, whose disappointed heart—
For friendship formed—would probably have found
Life, passed at Heathfield Villa, somewhat drear,
But for a circumstance which gilt its gloom.
This was the frequent visits of Bellairs,
Who had responded to the advances made
By Denis Brieton towards acquaintanceship,
Regardless of the dark repulsive frowns
That loured upon the brow of Antoinette.
Nor did he make an effort to conceal
The tender interest felt for Catherine:
An interest she excited in his heart
When first he saw her as a fugitive,
And which subsequent interviews increased.
Harriet's displeasure at her sister's flight
Subsided, when the truth was fully known.
A friendly intercourse became renewed,

And ere a year had passed, a letter told
That Catherine's former lover was consoled
For her desertion, by a lady fair—
Of his own faith—who was to bring with her
A splendid dowry; and the nuptial day
Was fixed on. But before the event took place,
The happy Catherine had become the bride
Of Reginald Bellairs, and was removed
From Brieton's dwelling to a mansion, fair,
A few miles distant. Brieton esteemed
His sister fortunate, because Bellairs
Had wealth. A few sad tears from Clarice's eyes
Fell, when the trying hour of parting came;
But Antoinette Telure could scarce conceal
Her joy, beneath decorum's seemly veil.

CANTO IV.

THE ROSARY.

CANDOUR.

There is a virtue, fair as light,
  Of heavenly wisdom born,
Though oft the world her counsels slight
  And treat her claims with scorn.

For candour praises not, nor blames,
  By partizanship's laws,
She at impartial fairness aims,
  And prejudice abhors.

Beneath her influence, faults confessed
  Make friendship's ties more dear,
And rivals, with unruffled breast,
  Each other's praises hear.

She loves her sacred power to use
  To clear an injured name,
Nor coldly spurns a just excuse,
  But weighs its rightful claim.

In controversy's troubled field,
  When angry passions lour,
She oft prevails on pride to yield,
  And own conviction's power.

She throws not sarcasm's poisoned dart
  'Gainst an opponent's breast,
Nor plays the sophist's treacherous part
  The victor's wreath to wrest.

Justice, and charity, and truth
  Adorn her sacred brow:
Her gifts more lovely render youth,
  And age with grace endow.

Those gifts to social life impart:
  O, Candour!—heavenly maid—
And rule the pen, the lips, the heart
  Of those who seek thine aid.

Since Korah's censers, by the sacred word
Were hallowed deemed, as offered to the Lord,
For altar use permitted to abide,—
The sad memorials of presumptuous pride;

Since in the Ark of God a place was given
To Aaron's rod, and manna—sent from heaven—
(Of sovereign power and mercy the record),
And held in reverence, though not adored;

Let not salvation's emblem be despised—
Although by superstition idolized;
Nor treat with scornful levity the sign
Of that dread cross, whose victim was divine.

'Twas Autumn, and the twilight's pensive shade
Was fast succeeding evening's radiant gloom,
When, by an oriel window, which o'erlooked
The garden, which a pleasant villa graced,
A matron past her youth, yet comely still,
Sat with her eyes bent on a rosary,
Which in her hand she held; her features, fine,
Bore the fair impress of a heart and mind
Where truth, and gentleness, and goodness dwelt,
Though mingled with an air of grief subdued;

'Twas Catherine Bellairs, who now had been
A widow many years, for only six
Of wedded life to her had been assigned;
But these were years of happiness and love,
Whose memory still was treasured in her heart.
'Twas near the close of that brief period
Clarice, long childless, to her bosom pressed
An infant daughter with maternal love.
But ah! how strange are life's vicissitudes!
While joy was Clarice's heart revisiting,
Catherine was mourning in the depths of woe,
For Death—dread severer of human ties—
Her much-loved husband had from earth removed.
She did not murmur at the dread decree,
Though deeply felt, for she had learned to own
Offending creatures must not dare rebel
Against the will Divine, but humbly seek
Supporting grace from Him, who in the midst
Of judgment, mercy will remember still.
Before her marriage, Catherine had viewed
Religion as a dread necessity;
And though towards the Saviour she had felt
Admiring awe, yet He had never filled
That place within her heart which is His due—
And given Him by the souls who, led to see
Their guilt and misery, have to His cross
Fled, as their refuge from the wrath divine.
But in her husband Catherine had found

The tender friend and faithful counsellor
Who on her mind endeavoured to impress
The value of the "gift unspeakable."
His prayers and efforts had not been in vain;
And in affiiction's day, religion brought
Its soul sustaining solace to her heart.
One source of earthly joy was left her still:
A little son, his father's fond delight,
Remained to cheer her lonely widowhood,
In whom her eye with mournful pleasure traced
The strong resemblance to that father borne.
This likeness, both in form and character,
Seemed to increase as childhood passed to youth,
And youth to manhood. He was standing, now,
In thoughtful mood, a figure spare and tall,
Yet graceful, and with striking features, cast
In nature's finest mould, o'er which there beamed
A countenance like that which painters give
The loved disciple, or the saint who proved
The first brave martyr for the cause of Christ.
Appearances are oft delusive found;
But 'twas not so with Willoughby Bellairs,
For he was one of those in whom the gifts
Of grace and nature happily combine,
And e'en the world were by the latter charmed
So much that they forgave his piety.
He had been striving, by the fading light,
To read some printed work of type minute,

Till, in despair, at length he laid it down,
And, turning with a smile of filial love
To Catherine, said—"My dearest mother, tell
"Why thus you count, with such an anxious look,
"The beads appended to that rosary.
"Were you a stranger, I should have surmised
"That you must be some Catholic devotee
"Breathing her vesper prayers to favourite saints."
"I marvel not," she answered with a sigh,
"Dear Willoughby, that you should feel surprised
"To see me thus employed: but to these beads
"A tale appends which gives them in my eyes
"An interest deep, though very far removed
"From that which superstition might attach.
"They once belonged to a dear female friend,
"Now passed from earth, and were her dying gift.
"We met in youth, and many pleasant hours
"Together spent alone, and by degrees
"I learned much of her mournful history.
"Before she came to live in Ireland,
"She and a sister with an aunt had dwelt—
"For they were orphans. One fair Summer's eve,
"While on a rural walk, they chanced to meet
"A fortune-telling hag, to whom—though 'gainst
"Her conscience and her sister's warning voice—
"She listened, and whose words were verified:
"Though (from her own relation), I confess,
"It seemed to me that, being credited,

"What was predicted tended much to work
"Its own fulfilment. Leaving, as I did,
"My brother's house so unexpectedly,
"I could not bid my friend a last farewell,
"Which grieved me much, as from her fragile health
"I greatly feared we ne'er might meet again.
"But, soon as I had reached my destined home,
"I wrote and told her all; and from that time
"We corresponded. But, before two years
"Had passed, the mournful tidings of her death
"Was, by her relatives, to me conveyed,
"With a few tokens of remembrance dear,
"Which she had left me, and, among the rest,
"This rosary—whose history I knew:
"For, as she told me, after she had lost
"Her aunt and sister, she had visited
"A Catholic family, who took much pains
"To win her to their faith. Her mind, subdued
"By sorrow's influence, nearly fell a prey
"To their unceasing efforts. While with them
"She purchased, at a charity bazaar,
"This rosary. But, happily for her,
"The friends with whom her final residence
"Was fixed, were good and pious Protestants—
"Whose efforts to expose the groundless claims
"And baneful errors of the Romish Church
"Were not in vain, and she was led to seek
"The peace her troubled conscience yearned to find

" In the true source of pardon, life, and joy.
" Yet, she still kept her once loved rosary,
" But used it as a kind remembrancer
" Of prayer at stated hours, both for herself
" And others also; more especially
" For those whose anxious zeal, sincere though blind,
" Might have proved fatal to her future peace.
" Since it was mine, I have, in some degree,
" Pursued her plan. Each bead hath, to my mind,
" A name attached to it, on whose behalf
" I daily supplicate the Throne of Grace."
" If all would thus their rosaries employ,
" They might be made available for good,"
Replied Bellairs; " for intercessary prayer
" By Scripture is enjoined, and to our hearts
" Commended by the gracious answers given
" To saints of old; but few, alas! appear
" To feel the duty binding on their souls.
" But of this lady's history, I pray,
" Give me a sketch." " To-morrow," she rejoined,
" I will; but fear 'twould occupy too much
" Of this day's remnant, for I have to write,
" And, on the subject of my letter, wish
" For your advice before we separate.
" But, ere I read it to you, let me ask
" Whether you hold with those who seem to think
" That witchcraft has been banished from the earth
" Since Christ to heaven ascended,—or believe

" The powers of darkness are permitted still
" With human agents to communicate?"
" 'Tis a mysterious subject," said Bellairs.
" I do not altogether disbelieve
" In witchcraft, sorcery, or magic arts;
" For if they had entirely disappeared
" After our Lord had from the earth withdrawn,
" Why need the Apostles have exhorted us
" From such things to abstain, and witchcraft classed
" With other hateful sins to be renounced?
" Though, doubtless, most of those who wish to pass
" For sorcerers or witches are not such,
" But mere impostors. And the vagrant tribe,
" Who earn their bread by fortune-telling craft,
" Are generally content to give the stars
" The credit of the knowledge they profess.
" Yet, even these, much mischief often work,
" And sometimes are, in secret, listened to
" By those who seem to hold them in contempt.
" But say from whom the letter was received
" You wish to answer?" " You will be surprised,"
Said Catherine, " when I tell you that it came
" From Thecla, and informs me she has gained
" Permission to sojourn with us a while
" From Father Claude; but on condition made
" That, while with us, she should from him receive
" Those pastoral visits, which he deems required
" For her soul's health, while with heretic friends,

" It grieves me much my brother should allow
" That wily priest o'er Thecla's mind to use
" Moral coercion's soul-subduing power
" To such extent as is, I fear, the case.
" But Antoinette has gradually gained
" Increased influence; and her counsellor,
" In my esteem, is no improved exchange
" For Father Urban, who, though bigoted,
" Of kindly feelings was not destitute.
" But Father Claude's repulsive, gloomy air,
" Betrays the secret enmity of heart
" He bears towards us, and all who dare oppose
" The Romish Church; and 'tis his wish, I fear,
" To alienate my brother's mind from me.
" But Antoinette regards him as a saint
" Already canonized; for legends say
" The Virgin Mother in his dreams appeared
" And bid him break from every earthly tie—
" Though to an amiable girl engaged—
" And to the Church devote his heart and life:
" And he, it seems, obeyed the illusive call."
" 'Tis hard, indeed," said Willoughby Bellairs,
" That we must not be suffered to enjoy
" Thecla's society, without her priest
" Darkening our doors with his intrusive form,
" Like some ill-omened bird." " Yet, much I fear,"
Said Catherine, " that were we to refuse
" His visits here, he would his influence use

"With Antoinette her coming to prevent:
"And we, by past experience, have learned
"That she is fertile in expedients."
"True," said Bellairs, "and so, perchance, 'twere best
"His presence to endure, as best we may,
"Than lose my cousin's visit, which has been
"Too long postponed: for I indulge a hope
"It may be made a blessing to her soul."
"Alas! I scarce need say how much I wish
"That hope no disappointment may sustain,"
Said Catherine, with a sigh; "although I own
"I am not sanguine, for when I have tried
"To lead dear Thecla—though I deem her mind,
"By nature, thoughtful and intelligent,—
"Converse to hold on any sacred theme
"She answers with a look of cold reserve,
"Like one who in religious subjects felt
"No interest." "I feel assured," he said,
"That cannot be the case; for apathy
"Of Thecla's character ne'er formed a part.
"But 'tis the subtle policy of Rome
"To lead her dupes to think it deadly sin
"To doubt her Church's claims, or ask for proofs:
"Asserting that to dare investigate
"What should with meek submission be received
"Is impious presumption. We who live
"In full enjoyment of the liberty
"The Church Reformed allows, can scarce conceive

"The helpless, hopeless, abject slavery
"In which the priests of Rome their vassals hold,
"Nor the dependent, sluggish indolence,
"Which o'er the mind it gradually brings.
"But I will not detain you, for I know
"You wish to write. I, also, am engaged
"To call upon a friend." Catherine retired—
And Willoughby set forth. While on his way,
He chanced to overtake a school-fellow
Whom, since their boyish days he scarce had seen:
Nor was an intercourse by either sought;
For what communion of sentiment,
Or sympathy of feeling, can exist
'Twixt the true Christian and the infidel?
But by the narrow pathway both became
Shut in awhile, so fell into discourse.
And as from the abundance of the heart
The lips will speak, it chanced that Willoughby
Made some remark with reference to the care
Of Providence, as overlooking all.
"And do you really think," said Irvindale,
(For such his name) with a sarcastic smile,
"That the Almighty Being who presides
"Over a universe of countless worlds,
"Concerns Himself with aught that may take place
"In this small planet, which is but a speck—
"An atom—with that universe compared?"
"I do," replied Bellairs. "To me, I own,

" His exaltation above creature minds
" Becomes more striking, from His wondrous power
" The little to perceive, sustain, and rule,
" As well as that which we as great esteem:
" Though what is great when with Himself compared?
" Numbers and magnitude may oft appear
" O'erwhelming to our finite, feeble minds,
" And we attach the idea of effort made,
" To power exerted, or to knowledge gained.
" But I can well believe, each grain of sand
" On ocean's shore—each animalculæ
" That bears a life, with all its history,
" He—by a power, perchance resembling that
" Which we intuitive perception call—
" Discerns, and by that power knows every thought
" Of every human heart and angel mind."
Just then, they reached a spot where, from the path
A few yards distant, stood what once had been
A pleasant mansion, with a garden fair—
But now a ruined desolated house,
Surrounded by a rugged wilderness
O'ergrown with thorns and weeds of coarsest kind—
When Irvindale, who, though Bellairs' remarks
Were by his own called forth, seemed not inclined
The subject to pursue, a moment paused
To gaze upon the spot, and then observed—
" That wretched-looking tenement deserves
" The name it has obtained of 'Haunted House,'

"Though I have heard some aged people tell
"That in their youth it was a villa fair."
"Why has it been deserted?" said Bellairs.
"Some tale of guilt and horror to the place
"Belongs; but its details I have not heard,"
Was Irvindale's reply. "Its owner left
"And went abroad, and it has since remained
"Without an occupant, for those who made
"A brief attempt to dwell there quickly left,
"Affirming sounds of preternatural kind
"Were heard within its walls, and spectral forms
"Of awful presence frequently appeared,
"The offspring, doubtless, of their morbid fears.
"But, be that as it may, it hath not been
"Inhabited for many a bygone year;
"Though lately, I am told that glimmering lights
"Are seen within its walls at midnight's hour,
"And that a woman, who pretends to be
"A witch or sorceress, has chosen it—
"Not inappropriately—for her abode.
"They say her skill in divination's art
"Surprises all whom curiosity,
"Or other motives, lead to seek her cave.
"Of course, I cannot answer for the truth
"Of these assertions, and possess, myself,
"No faith in magic or astrology."
Scarce had they passed the spot, before the path
Diverged two ways, and each was but too glad

To separate. Bellairs soon reached his friends.
But Irvindale, when darkness closed around,
Returned again in secret to the place,
For he, that very evening, had set forth
To seek the sorceress, and test her powers,
For the recovery of a paper lost,
Which he of value deemed. So, true it is,
That scepticism oft is found combined
With superstition in the human heart;
And they who Satan and his power deride
As fables—which by an enlightened age
Should be discarded—frequently display,
When some emergency or trial shakes
The usual stoic calmness of their minds,
A strange amount of weak credulity—
At variance with their boasted unbelief,
And e'en with reason and philosophy.

CANTO V.

THE EVENING WALK.

THE GROTTO.

I love thee, lonely grotto,
  And oft my footsteps stray
To seek thy pleasing shelter
  From Summer's sultry ray,
No glaring sunbeams e'er invade
The twilight of thy pensive shade.

Thy solitary sadness
  Is dearer to my heart
Than scenes of mirth and gladness,
  Where oft I sit apart—
And feel an isolated thing
That can no welcome tribute bring.

Thy rugged roof adorning,
  Dank weeds—a treasured store—
Found strewn at early morning
  Upon the sea-girt shore!
In drooping sadness seem to weep
On ocean's breast again to sleep.

Bright shells, whose sober splendour
  Gleam on thy rugged walls,
Thy mossy cavern render
  Like mermaids' shining halls,
While sparkling fount—as crystal clear—
Delights the eye and soothes the ear.

Upon its surface growing—
  For ever fair and bright—
The water lilies glowing,
  In robes of spotless white,
Seem like departed saints that bide
Where peace and purity reside.

I love thee, lonely grotto,
  Where I can muse unseen,
On dear ones gone before me
  To those blest realms serene,
And breathe to Heaven a silent prayer
That I their blissful rest may share.

THE HOLY LAND.

It was the evening's silent hour,
  And setting sunlight shone,
When near the window of their bower
  Two maidens sat alone.

When one exclaimed—" How sweet to mark
  " The charms of opening Spring!
" The trees are green in yonder park;
  " I hear the cuckoo sing.

" And yet it grieves me much, to tell,
  " That I must leave thy side;
" But well you know, my Christabel,
  " How often I have sighed

" To see Jerusalem's Holy Land:
  " And 'tis my sire's intent
" To join some friends—a social band—
  " Upon that journey bent.

" O! how I wish, but fear 'tis vain,
  " That you could go with me;
" But soon I shall return again
  " To tell you all I see.

" I trust, when Summer comes once more,
  " 'Twill pain and weakness chase,
" And health's bright tints again restore
  " To that now pallid face."

A wasted form—though young and fair—
  Reclining near her side,
Upraised her eyes, with languid air,
  And mournfully replied:—

"A thousand joys may Summer bear,
  "My Alice, dear, to thee;
"But azure skies and balmy air
  "Will bring no health to me.

"For they who danger's symptoms know,
  "No cheering hopes impart:
"Then, ah! 'tis time from all below
  "To wean this clinging heart.

"Yet think not, here, a prisoner pent,
  "I purpose to remain,—
"I, too, am on a journey bent,
  "Nor shall return again.

"I'm going to the Holy Land—
  "Where all is bright and glad—
"Thou, to the earthly Zion's strand,
  "To trace her ruins—sad.

"With thee I may not, cannot roam,
  "The Saviour's steps to trace,
"Nor weep, like Mary, at His tomb,—
  "But I shall see His face."

They bid farewell, when Summer came,
And each the parting mourned;
But Nature's charms were on the wane
Ere Alice had returned.

* * * * * *

It was the evening's silent hour,
And moonbeams faintly shone,
When at the window of her bower
A maiden sat—alone.

She gazed upon the leaf-strewn strand,
And many a tear she shed,
For, ah! to Heaven's Holy Land
Fair Christabel had fled.

Perchance, amid the thoughts and feelings caused
By expectation of their gentle guest,
Bellairs forgot the passing interest
Which Julia's mournful history had called forth.
We, therefore, give the simple narrative,
With some details to Catherine unknown:

'Twas Summer, and the setting sun had shed
His soft refulgence o'er a quiet scene
In one of England's rural provinces:
Hill, dale, and woodland shared the golden light,
And on the stream its beams, reflected, shone.
The air was sweet with scent of new made hay—
And filled with melody from many a bough,
Where thrush and blackbird poured their thrilling strains.
But, save the shepherd—on his evening task
Intent—or milkmaid, blithe, few figures graced
The rural scene: though many a cot, and farm,
And rustic windmill—with its ærial sail—
Varied the landscape; while, at intervals,
Dwellings of higher grade were seen to rise.
Of these was one, which, in its palmy days
Had been the Manor House—and still retained
That appellation with the villagers,
Though robbed by time's dilapidating hand
Of all its splendour—part in ruin lay;
The rest was picturesquely covered o'er
With ivy green. The ample garden-ground
Was now a kind of beauteous wilderness,
Where desolation and luxuriance held
A joint dominion: lawn, and shrubbery,
And flowers in rich profusion wildly grew.
An arbour and a grotto, though forlorn,
Still graced the scene; the latter was adorned

With moss and shells. These, with some broken urns
And marble statues, mutilated now,
Filled up a picture which, in silence bore
To time's destructive influence, witness sad.
And yet, the spot a little Eden seemed
To two fair sisters, who therein had dwelt
From childhood's earliest years. Their parents died
Long since, and they were placed beneath the care
Of a kind relative, who loved them well.
She in this mansion dwelt, and 'twas from thence
The youthful pair, with gladdened hearts, went forth
To take their evening walk amid the scene
Before described. On their return, they strayed
Along a rural lane where grassy banks—
With trees surmounted—rose on either side,
Adorned with woodbine and convolvulus,
Which Julia plucked to deck her glossy hair—
Conscious their beauty equalled not her own;
For she was beautiful. And yet she lacked
The charm that dwelt in Lydia's countenance:
For mental loveliness imparts a grace
Surpassing brilliant eyes and blooming cheeks.
Lydia was not of beauty destitute,
Though, as the snowdrop, pale. While Julia twined
A garland gay, she on the bank reposed:
And Julia soon was glad to rest awhile.
They gazed upon the peaceful scene around—
And watched the crows returning to their nests

With slow and solemn flight, like funeral train:
And swallow sailing 'mid the azure sky,
As if in contemplative rapture lost,
When, unexpectedly, a female form—
Withered and dark—who seemed of gipsy tribe,
Was seen, emerging from a narrow path,
By Julia, who thoughtlessly exclaimed—
"See, what a hideous crone! I ne'er beheld
"A hag so like the witches legends paint."
"Hush! dearest, hush!" the gentle Lydia said;
"She'll hear your words. We should not speak of age,
"Nor e'en of ugliness, with such contempt."
While thus she spoke, the figure nearer drew,
And, in a harsh and croaking voice, besought
For alms, asserting she possessed the power
The future destinies of each to tell.
But Lydia, with a serious look, replied—
"Nay, woman; none our future lot can know
"But He who all o'errules, and they who trust
"In Him, may leave their future in His hands.
"But if distress hath led thee to pursue
"This sinful calling, much I pity thee,
"And thou art welcome to the alms implored."
So saying, in the withered hand she placed
A silver coin, and homeward took her way;
Though Julia refused to follow her,
In spite of her entreating look and words.

Spell-bound by that infatuating wish,
So oft indulged by stronger minds than hers,
To listen to imposture's idle tales—
E'en while professing to despise the cheat.
Meanwhile, the gipsy—eyeing her askance,
While wrath and hatred smouldered in her breast,
(For the light words of scorn had been o'erheard)—
Took Julia's fee, then muttered to herself
Some words, which to her auditor appeared
A senseless jargon. But, at length, she told—
For well she knew how flattering words beguile—
That many a sighing youth admired her charms:
And one, especially, by all esteemed
For noble qualities and manly grace;
But that ere yet his love became matured
A rival, fair, his heart from her would steal.
Nor was this cloud the only one that loured
On her horizon: She would lose a friend,
And be removed from that beloved home
In which her life had hitherto been spent,
And die, unwedded, ere seven summer's more
Had passed away. The gipsy paused, and saw
That youthful face, so lately dressed in smiles,
With sadness clouded; and malicious joy
Gleamed in her lurid eyes, although her brow
Still wore its withering scowl. She turned away;
While Julia stood absorbed in painful thought
And with herself displeased: then homeward bent

Her steps, and soon her sister overtook.
But pride impelled her to assume an air
Of unconcern, and even gaiety;
And Lydia from enquiries abstained.
Well had it been for Julia, could a drop
From Lethe's far-famed stream have blotted out
That wretched woman's words from memory's page.
But oft our sins and follies with them bring
Their own sad punishment: and hence a tale—
The offspring of imposture's cunning brain—
In secret brooded o'er, began to shed
Its baneful influence o'er her destiny.
At that romantic hour when moonbeams shed
Their silver light upon the silent earth,
Julia would sit alone, absorbed in thought,
And wonder whether Vernon was the youth
To whom the fortune-teller's words referred—
Her cousin Vernon—who, in early days,
Had been their playmate. "Yes, it must be he,"
She fondly thought, for who could equal him
In noble qualities or manly grace?
And thus his image, to her mind recalled,
Became invested with an interest
Ne'er felt before, and dangerous to her peace.
For, though he was a frequent visitor,
And felt for both a brotherly regard,
It was not love—in truth he deemed it wise
To guard his heart, for wealth was not his lot;

And in the struggling world to make his way
Was what, at present, occupied his thoughts.
And when the disappointed Julia saw
That Lydia his attentions fully shared,
The thought that she might be the rival fair,
To whom the gipsy's warning had referred,
Haunted her mind and jealous feelings woke.
For when the human mind is not controlled
By genuine piety, it often proves
Unjust and selfish in the trying hour:
And Julia—though their aged relative
Had trained them in religion's sacred path—
Had not, like Lydia, sought in earnest prayer
For grace divine. Her heart to earthly things
Was wholly given; no wonder 'twas o'errun
With nature's baneful weeds. Her eye soon lost
The kind expression which affection gives;
Her voice, its tones: and the sweet confidence
Which once between the gentle sisters reigned,
Was changed to cold estrangement and reserve,—
At least, on Julia's part. And though her love
To Vernon daily grew, the very wish
To hide it from him to her manner gave
An air repulsive, which his friendship chilled.
But in the eyes of Lydia still he saw
The same kind look of sisterly regard,
Which they had ever worn from childhood's days:
And oft her gentle smile refreshed his soul,

In those few leisure hours he yet could spare
From the stern pressure of life's opening cares.
Julia—offended at some fancied slight—
From their society had much withdrawn,
And seemed to court the charms of solitude.
Her absence was regretted for awhile;
But soon he found the hours pass rapidly,
In converse sweet; for Lydia to each theme
A pleasing interest ever could impart,
And she would lead his mind to higher thoughts
And holier things than this vain world suggests.
She grew upon him, like some beauteous shore,
Which to the gazing mariner appears
More lovely as each hour he nearer draws:
And Lydia, herself, began to find
A charm in life it ne'er before possessed.
Time glided on, and soon the robin's song,
The shortening daylight, and the falling leaves
Of waning Autumn told of Winter nigh,—
And Winter evenings—once so much enjoyed.
But sad and dreary did those evenings prove
To the fair inmates of the Manor House.
For Vernon, now, by anxious cares engrossed,
But seldom came: and ere the honored time
Of Christmas had arrived, their aged friend
A victim to paralysis became.
While death was threatened, both the sisters shewed
Devoted and untiring tenderness;

But when all present danger was removed,
Julia grew weary of the daily task
Of cheering sad depression's mournful hours,
While Lydia's love—by principle sustained—
Ne'er failed its gentle mission to fulfil.
But Spring, sweet Spring! at length returned again,
The cuckoo's pleasing note fell on the ear
And opening flowers their homely garden graced:
But Lydia, with a troubled eye, observed
That Julia's cheek had lost its roseate bloom,
And e'en her step its light elastic tread;
And though enquiry met a cold reply
She watched her still with anxious tenderness,
But never dream't that love had caused the change—
For she had taken for indifference
The cold constraint towards Vernon, lately shewn,
And almost wished that she could feel the same,
Since that dear cousin, who within her heart
An interest deep had gained, had never spoke
The love his looks and manner had betrayed.
But circumstance doth oft abruptly make
Disclosures unforeseen; and thus it was
With the fair sisters of the Manor House:
For Vernon's fortunes suddenly assumed
An aspect new, which, though it brought him wealth
And prospects fair, a drawback sad, involved:
For he must leave—and that without delay—
His native land for a far distant one,

Where he would, probably, be long detained.
The tidings soon his aunt and cousins reached
And told them he would come to bid farewell
That evening; but must leave the ensuing day.
Together—though alone in heart and mind—
The sisters in a gloomy parlour sat
At their embroidery. The note was read
By Lydia, when an exclamation fell
From Julia's lips, which, with the deathly hue
Spread o'er her countenance, to Lydia's mind
Suspicion, nay—conviction, with them brought
That both had loved—and loved, perchance, in vain.
Few were the comments made on either side:
For each sad bosom yearned, in solitude,
To hide emotion's pang. Fair Julia
Her chamber sought: but Lydia, pale and faint,
Strayed 'mid the garden wild; but sought, ere long,
The grotto, which from early years had been
The loved retreat where she could muse alone.
There, floods of tears relieved her swelling heart,
Which by a double grief was now oppressed.
To part from Vernon—bitter though it was—
She could have borne, had she but felt assured
He loved her. But alas! the painful thought
That Julia loved him, too, was agony.
For now, it seemed like cruel selfishness
To wish for what might break a sister's heart:
For she the reason but too plainly saw

For Julia's altered looks and failing health.
" How could I bear," she thought, " to see her pine—
" To see those eyes—so bright and joyous once—
" Encircled by the dark, portentous ring.
" Were she to droop and sink into the grave,
" Could I be happy—e'en with Vernon's love?
" My dearest mother, on her dying bed,
" Bid us supply her place by mutual love;
" And I—though but a child—a promise gave:
" And shall I shrink from aught that vow involves
" Now trial's hour has put me to the test?"
So—yielding to what some, perchance, would deem
A morbid sensibility—she made
A hasty vow; but scarcely had it passed
Her trembling lips before she heard the sound
Of footsteps drawing nigh: she raised her eyes,
And saw her cousin's form before her stand.
He came to tell the tale of faithful love—
To tell how changed his prospects had become—
And ask her his prosperity to share
In that far distant, although beauteous land,
Which, parted from her, would a desert seem.
He paused—for Lydia, like a statue, stood
In mute despair! then clasped her hands, and said—
" It must not be;—for ah! a barrier lies
" 'Twixt us and all those dreams of happiness.
" Too fondly does my heart return thy love
" To feel no pang, when thus compelled to own

"It is not in my power to share thy lot—
"Nor yet, to explain the mystery which involves
"Another's name. But hush! methinks I hear
"A rustling sound, like some one lingering nigh.
"I must not stay—O! take my last farewell."
He heard the intruder's step, with tortured ear,
And, stung with grief and disappointed love,
He pressed her icy hand, and in a voice
Which told the deep emotion of his heart,
He said,—"I cannot this denial take;
"But we shall meet again ere I depart."
Then left the bower; but scarcely had he passed
The entrance, when—within the winding path
Which to it led—his startled eyes beheld
The unhappy Julia, pale and motionless:
While in her sparkling eyes there shone the blaze
Of jealous anger. And as Lydia's words—
"Another's name involves"—recurred to mind,
The truth, like lightning, flashed across his soul,
And gave his generous heart a bitter pang.
But what avails it to describe the scenes
Which intervened 'twixt that unhappy hour
And his departure. Lydia still was firm,
Although her heart with secret anguish bled;
For she perceived a shade of sad reproach
Was mingled with the look of love and grief
That marked his last farewell. But who can tell
The dreary blank which his departure caused

To those fair sisters, in their lonely home?
Though Vernon's love to Lydia was surmised
By Julia, yet she knew not all; nor dreamed
That Lydia for her sake, and for the vow
Made to her dying mother, had resigned
Her dearest hopes. Awhile they mourned apart:
But soon the sympathy of mutual grief
Drew them together; and e'en Julia felt
The love of by-gone days in part return,
And Lydia gently strove to lead her mind
To look for solace to that only source
Of consolation which can never fail:
And next to that, to seek the healthful aid
Employment to the human mind affords;
Nor scorn those springs of innocent delight
Which once had charmed. Again they wandered forth
On rural walks, or visits to the poor,
Or strayed in paddock green, at evening's hour,
And watched the lambkins at their sportive play;
While books, and music, and the pencil's art
Supplied amusement for their leisure hours.
But, where was now the sunny gladness flown
Which once had shed a charm o'er each employ?
Their cousin, now, by neither e'er was named,
And 'twas in secret Lydia read the lines
From him received, which told of love unchanged,
But breathed the sad complainings of a heart

Which—though by affluence, and all the joys
Which it affords, surrounded—inly pined.
The gentle heart of Lydia to his grief
Too well responded: health began to fail,—
And life's frail sands, by sorrow's cruel hand
So rudely shaken, swiftly ran their course.
But Julia, still engrossed by vain regrets,
Saw not the change. It chanced, a relative—
Of whom they had, as yet, but little seen—
With kind intent invited them to join
Her husband and herself upon a tour
Through Palestine; but Lydia declined,
For well she knew how much the invalid—
Still to her room confined—would miss her care.
So Julia went alone (glad of a change),
Though in her mind no ardent interest glowed
To see the sacred place where He had lived—
Where He had died—who, in her heart, as yet,
Reigned not: for idols long had filled its throne.
The party tarried long. On her return
Sad tidings reached her, and when she arrived—
Lydia from this vain world had passed away!
And Julia, by experience, had to learn
That life has other woes besides the pangs
Of unrequited love; and that its joys
And blessings, if unthankfully received,
May make their value known, when all too late.

Their aunt had both her beauteous nieces loved,
But Lydia's devoted tenderness
Had made her doubly dear; and when she saw
Her darling to the silent grave consigned
She sank, oppressed with sad despondency,
And followed her, ere many weeks had passed.
The wretched Julia—thus strangely left—
Of sorrow and remorse became the prey,
And seemed to hear again the croaking voice
Which told of change and death. The relatives
Whom she had travelled with, by pity moved
For one so desolate, invited her—
When they returned—to make her home with them.
Meanwhile, she visited a youthful friend,
Whose family were of the Romish faith,
And might have fallen a victim to their zeal;
But, happily for her, was soon removed
To dwell with those whose more enlightened views
And pious efforts to her soul were blessed—
By leading her to seek salvation's boon
Through the Redeemer's name, and His alone.
Yet, superstitious fears would oft return,
And apprehensions that—although forgiven—
Some penal punishment might be her lot.
And when the year, the gipsy had foretold
Would be her last, arrived, health—long impaired—
Each day declined, and ere that year had closed

She breathed her last, far from her native place,
And the loved residence of early days,
As was predicted by the unhallowed lips
Of her she met with on that evening walk,
From which she dated all her earthly woes.

CANTO VI.

ZATAHRA.

O! make not thou an idle jest
  Of Satan's fearful power:
His fiery darts may pierce thy breast
  In some unguarded hour.

He feigns himself a fabled thing,
  To chase each wise alarm,
And lulls the soul with vampire wing
  That should for danger arm.

Do we not sin and sorrow scan
  In all things here below?
They are his work, who ruined man
  And triumphs in his woe.

'Mid heathen nations, where he holds
  An undisputed sway,
What deeds of darkness we behold
  Done in the face of day.

His agents walk the earth around—
  A fierce and subtle host—
Who, e'en where Gospel light abounds,
  Their dread successes boast.

But Christ, who 'mid the desert's gloom,
  The tempter's guile withstood,
And rescued sinners from their doom
  By His atoning blood,

Will hearts sincere, to Him who pray,
  With grace benignant own,
Nor leave their souls, in trial's day,
  Unaided and alone.

The gipsy hag, who Julia's fortune told,
Made no pretension to Satanic arts.
In truth, she cared not—so that she obtained
The guerdon sought—to what her listeners chose
Her knowledge to ascribe; but 'twas not oft
That any, saving those of humble grade,
To her revealings cared to lend an ear:
Yet e'en from these she gained what well sufficed
For her support, and also for her child's—
To whom she shewed but little tenderness,
Though proud of her,—for she was by the camp

Esteemed a handsome and quick-witted child:
But passion, sullen pride, and dark revenge
Already in her character appeared.
It chanced, a lady—to whose residence
She, by her mother, frequently was sent
With watercresses from a neighbouring spring—
Was with Zatahra's beauty greatly struck,
And sent her to a day-school, where she learned
To read and write—for she was apt to learn—
And fondly hoped that as a prodigy
She, by her young companions, should be deemed.
No pious lessons at this school were taught:
And knowledge may be turned to ill account
As well as good. Her heart remained unchanged,
And as her manners were not amiable,
The lady—when the camp was broken up,
Their devious wanderings elsewhere to pursue—
No interest in Zatahra's welfare shewed.
When old enough, she quickly learned to ply
Her mother's sinful calling, and displayed
A skill—by natural genius supplied—
Which brought her popularity and gain,
The love of which grew stronger every day.
She often marked with pride the wondering awe
With which so many heard their fate revealed:
Though some repelled her with a scornful laugh
And told her that her words were idle tales,
Till, much incensed, within her breast there rose

The restless wish that she possessed the power
She only feigned. Yet—conscious it was wrong—
That wish, perchance, in time had died away,
But for a passion stronger than the love
Of gold, or fame: that passion was revenge,
Which in the female bosom—when called forth
By scorn, or insult more especially—
Oft burns with an intensity as deep,
If not still deeper, than in that of man.
And she, alas! from childhood had been prone
To nurse vindictive passions in her heart.
Though by her young companions not beloved,
She was admired: and by the villagers,
Where she was now located, noticed much,
And often called "the handsome gipsy girl."
But scarcely had she eighteen summers seen
Before her mother died, and she was cast
Upon her own resources for support.
But, well experienced in predictive art,
She made her way, and soon an entrance gained
Not only in the cottages around,
But the farmhouses, where the serving maids,
And e'en the rosy daughters of the house—
With smiles of feigned incredulity—
Of prosperous farms and handsome husbands heard,
With other pleasant things by her foretold.
E'en in the squire's mansion she, at length,
Obtained admission to the servant's hall:

But one unlucky day, through some mistake,
Was to the general hall of entrance shewn.
While waiting there, it chanced a visitor
Passed through, and—with her personal graces struck,
Set off by a costume of pleasing form—
Made some enquiry, and on being told
Of her vocation, smiled complacently,
And, placing in her hand a piece of gold,
Bid her reveal the future destiny
The stars ordained for him. At sight of gold
Her brilliant eyes with added lustre shone,
And, with a blush and curtsey, she obeyed:
And her inventive fancy called upon
To sketch a fortune worthy of his gift;
But, bidding her be brief, he vanished soon,
And scarcely had he done so, ere she spied
A lady standing on a staircase, near,
Handsome and young, in elegant attire—
Who, with a look and tone of angry scorn,
Desired the servants from the house to drive
"That bold, disreputable vagabond,
"And bid her, at her peril, to appear
Within its doors again." The gipsy girl
Fled instantly,—with mingled rage and fear
Contending in a heart as proud as that
The high-born fair so cruelly displayed.
But as she fled, she on the lady cast
A look which, had it answered to her wish,

As fatal as a basilisk's had proved.
This lady was a daughtar of the house,
And the betrothed of him who had bestowed
The piece of gold. But he, alas! was one
Whose gentlemanly guise served but to hide
A villain's heart. He sought Zatahra out:
Vain, weak, and credulous, and of the world
Entirely ignorant, she soon became
His victim—for she loved him, and believed
His promises of marriage—meant by him
To be considered but as love's fond tale.
But soon—his fancy o'er—he cast her off,
And mocked her grief with that derisive scorn
More hard to bear than injury and wrong;
For when reminded of his promises,
With haughty laugh, he said—" Did you suppose,
" Deluded creature! I could e'er intend
" To wed a low-born vagrant, like yourself?
" Whose more appropriate place within my house
" Would be as scullery maid." The wretched girl—
Maddened, as if by serpent's poisonous sting—
In terms unscrupulous, made a fierce retort,
Which chanced to touch a vulnerable part
And gall his pride; and moved with wrathful ire,
He, not long afterwards—in part to please
His fair intended, who towards her bore
Hatred implacable—became resolved
All further molestation to escape

By exercise of magisterial power:
And soon the unhappy gipsy was consigned—
As one who practised fortune-telling arts—
To prison; where in durance she remained,
With swelling heart, until he left the place
Upon his wedding tour. By this last act
Of heartless baseness, e'en the faintest spark
Of lingering love within Zatahra's breast
Became extinguished, and a burning thirst
For vengeance took possession of her soul.
She called on Heaven for retributive wrath
On her seducer; but ne'er asked herself
What her own fate would be, if righteous Heaven
Inflicted punishment, without a space—
By its long-suffering—for repentance given.
She called on earth,—but there are deeds of wrong,
Law cannot reach, nor is it always dealt
To rich and poor with an impartial hand.
So, in an evil hour, the wretched girl,—
On vengeance madly bent, whate'er the cost,—
In some strange form which she had heard prescribed,
Applied to him, whom Holy Scripture calls
"The Evil One," and bids us shun his wiles,
Since he is ever ready to entrap
The souls that never pray for heavenly grace.
Whether she saw some sight, or heard some sound
Of fearful kind, that answered her appeal,
Or fancied that she did, she never told,

But some hours after, prostrate on the earth—
Cold and insensible—her form was found:
And from that hour a change passed over her;
Her lively graces fled, and o'er her came
A look of fierce disdain and sullen gloom.
Soon as from prison she became released,
She left the camp and wandered by herself,
But told to none her plans or purposes.
The village bells, soon afterwards, proclaimed
The happy pair had to their home returned;
And that fair mansion, for a while, became
The scene of mirth and gay festivity.
But scarcely had the honey-moon elapsed,
Ere deepest woe in its apartments reigned;
For, by some peasants, in a lonely spot,
The lately joyous bridegroom had been found
A pallid corpse, upon the greensward stretched—
But with no marks of human violence.
His widow, when the year of mourning passed,
To the gay world returned, and left her child—
Born since its father's death—to nurse's care.
But ere three years elapsed she, too, was called
From earth, and all its vanities, away.

But to the wretched gipsy to return:
Through England's provinces she roamed awhile,
Then on the Continent for years pursued
Her sinful calling—taking different names—

And seldom long remaining in a place.
And at the time when Catherine to Bellairs
Spoke of the history of Julia—
(Her fortune-telling mother's early dupe)—
She was located in the tenement
Before described. A gipsy—who had known
Her mother and herself in former days,
And who her wanderings had accompanied—
The post of porteress and attendant filled.
At first, her applicants were poor, and few,
But they increased: and her celebrity,
Ere long, was such, that of the higher class—
Though in disguise, and by the shades of night
Concealed—full many a visitor appeared
Before the portals of the "Haunted House."
Three cavern-like apartments, underground,
A gloomy suite composed, and aptly formed,
Waiting, consulting, and retiring rooms.
Though now in middle age, she still retained
Her handsome features and her striking form:
But ah! the evil passions of her soul
Had on her countenance their impress fixed,
Which but too well accorded with the name—
"Demonia"—by which she now was called.
Her mental powers had, since her early youth,
Been much developed; for the knowledge gained
At the poor village school, in early days,
Had self-improvement put within her power,

[illegible] alas! to ill devoted now.
[illegible] languages she soon acquired
[illegible] knowledge to enable her
[illegible] communion with her visitors.
[illegible] would be the effort to depict
[illegible] and woe her presence quickly wrought
[illegible] a mind, and home—once happy deemed;
[illegible]ous desires, ambitious thoughts,
[illegible]ul feelings, envious heart-burnings,
[illegible]es of unlawful tendency
[illegible] by her baneful influence, called forth
[illegible] hearts, where—but for her—they might have slept.
[illegible] many a sad domestic tragedy
[illegible] have been traced to dark Demonia's cave,
[illegible] death-bed revelations brought to light:
[illegible] numbers, who their visits ne'er revealed,
[illegible], through their future lives deplored the hour,
[illegible], mindless of the words of Holy Writ,
[illegible] sought for knowledge by unlawful means,
[illegible] found it—like ill-gotten wealth—a curse.
[illegible]—lost to all that's good—the sorceress
[illegible] only for her gains, and pleasure found
[illegible] wielding o'er the mind and history
[illegible] those whose folly placed them in her power,
[illegible] sceptre from whose soul-enslaving spell
[illegible] was hopeless. Yet, this strong desire
[illegible] o'er others, gained and exercised,
[illegible] common to the human mind,

Though manifested in a thousand forms.
Is it not seen in Rome's tyrannic Church
To form the animating principle
By which her conquests have o'erspread the world?
Is it not that, which bids Loyola's sons
Time, talents, energies,—yea, all—devote
To aid their Order's visionary hope—
The minds and destinies of men to rule?
Though, if a tree be judged of by its fruits,
That empire would be no millennium.

CANTO VII.

MEMORY'S DARK PAGES.

MEMORY.

O! Memory, in thy caverns—deep,
Departed joys and sorrows sleep
So silently: they seem as laid
For ever in oblivion's shade.
But at thy quickening voice they wake
Again, the hues of life to take.
But, seen through lapse of vanished years,
How changed their aspect oft appears.
For many joys, once fondly prized,
All pale, like pallid spectres rise;
While griefs, deplored with many a tear,
A form benignant seem to wear,
When Mercy's mission we descry
Was mingled with their ministry.

Yet—save the proud, whose callous mind
Is to their errors ever blind—
Ah! who can muse on days gone by
Without a self-reproachful sigh?
For e'en the good, who long have striven
To tread the path that leads to Heaven,
Will mourn o'er many a mis-spent day
That was not passed in wisdom's way.
O'er hearts absorbed by worldly care,
And lifeless, or neglected prayer;
And many a fault the contrite own—
As sprung from nature's heart of stone—
The hasty words of wrath or pride,
The call for sympathy—denied,
The idle taunt, or cruel jest,
Left rankling in another's breast—
Though by the thoughtless trivial deemed,
Are by the Heaven-taught mind esteemed
As breaches of that law of love,
Ordained by Him who reigns above.
The more the enlightened soul aspires
To reach the standard he requires,
The more does memory act the part
Of self-accuser to the heart:
'or spares the pang that makes it pine,
she its graces may refine,
ıd fit it for the realms above,
here all is holiness and love.

THE DYING YEAR.

The Old Year lay on her dying bed,
  And the New Year—young and fair,
Beside that bed, bent down her head
  These parting words to hear:—

"My daughter, when the bell tolls twelve
  "Thou wilt begin thy reign:
"And smiles and tears, and hopes and fears,
  "Form thy attendant train.

"The sons of men will soon forget
  "The lessons I had taught,
"Though each rising sun, as its course it run,
  "Some fresh instruction brought.

"They think not of the record, sad,
  "Which I must bear to Heaven—
"Of prayerless days, and sinful ways,
  "And hearts to Mammon given."

As thus she spake, she breathed her last,
  And the bell tolled midnight's hour:
And while mortals slept, the New Year wept
  Her tears in a passing shower.

Then veiled her form in a sable cloud,
  But she did not wear it long,
For when morning broke, the world awoke
  And called for mirth and song.

"Another year is gone," they cried;
  "But since regret is vain,
"In revels, gay, we'll spend the day
  "That sees the New Year's reign."

"You know not what my reign may bring,"
  Was the youthful year's reply;
"Many hearts that were gay last New Year's Day
  "Now cold in darkness lie.

"And many a blooming cheek will fade
  "Before that reign shall close,
"And many a breast be with grief opprest
  "That now no sorrow knows.

"Think not I social joys condemn,
  "Or blame the festive scene;
"But let not the glad—nor yet, the sad,
  "Forget the things unseen.

"But gird their loins, and trim their lamps,
  "Obedient to His word—
"Who bids them pray, and watch alway,
  "For the coming of their Lord."

The soul, refined by grace, will always find
Much for repentant thought to dwell upon:
Nor will it flee the pain such feelings bring,
By self-deceiving arts; but rather pray—
As did the Psalmist—" Search, O Lord, my heart!
" Try Thou my thoughts: and lead me in the way
" Of everlasting peace, that leads to Thee."
The Scriptures say not—" Blessed is the man
" Whose heart and life are from transgression free"—
For such have ne'er been found since Adam fell;
But—" Blessed is the man whose guilt has found
" Forgiveness, and whose sins are covered o'er."
And we, whose happy lot it is to live
Beneath the Gospel dispensation, know
Where to apply for pardon for the past,
And Grace Divine, our future to direct.
But, woe to those who bear upon their souls
The weight of unconfessed—unpardoned sin:
Though they should wander through earth's fairest realms,
And make its brightest green spots their abode,
'Twere vain: not Eden's bowers could bring them peace.
Before Zatahra came to Belgium
She made a lengthened residence at Rome;

And there, in spite of priestly vigilance,
By many a secret applicant was sought.
'Twas on the evening of the closing year—
When superstition's legendary tales
To fire-side listeners are by gossips told—
That serious minds on life's vicissitudes,
And death—their final close—are wont to muse:
But thoughtless souls and hardened hearts can boast
A fatal power to banish solemn thoughts.
That power, perchance, the sorceress possessed:
Or how could she have solitude endured?
She now was sitting in her gloomy cave
Alone; some faggots blazed upon the hearth,
Which cast a lurid light, whose flickering ray
Left shadows dark, which seemed upon the walls
To dance like demons, wild. At length, the door
Unclosed, and—by the gloomy porteress—
A stately form, in military cloak,
Was ushered in, who, with an air abrupt,
Addressed Zatahra thus,—" I wish to learn
" The name of him who dare this letter send
" To me,—to whom its import must remain
" A dark enigma, unless thou canst solve
" The mystery—though, perchance, 'twould wiser be
" To throw it in the fire. But I confess
" That—spite of the contempt I entertain
" For aught anonymous—the feeling deemed
" Your sex's foible, stole upon my mind

"With such unusual and resistless force
"That I resolved to seek thy skilful aid.
"Read this, and play the truthful oracle."
He placed an open letter in her hand
Of which the lines ran thus:—"If to the guilt
"Of murder—which already stains thy soul—
"Thou wouldest not add the no less fearful crime
"Of incest—wed not the fair Rosalie."
The sorceress read them with attention deep,
Then raised her eyes, which like two meteors glared,
And said—"Are there no pages, dread and dark,
"In memory's secret records, which might help
"The import of these lines to render clear?"
"None," he replied,—though something in his voice
Belied the stony calmness of his brow—
"Save that the charge of murder may refer
"To an assassin, whom I justly slew
"In self-defence; but for the warning given
"Respecting one to whom I am betrothed,
"To me, 'tis quite incomprehensible:
"Some moon-struck rival, moved by jealousy,
"Methinks, the base effusion must have penned."
"Maniacs have sometimes secret truths revealed,"
Replied Zatahra, with a bitter smile;
"But wilt thou I consult my magic books?"
"Do so," he answered. From a pile she took
A folio, but the leaves seemed blank and void
Until she breathed on them; when on the page

Strange hieroglyphic characters appeared.
Zatahra studied them with earnest look,
Then said—"The name of him who penned these lines
"Will ne'er be known to thee, on this side death;
"But truthful is the statement they contain,
"As I—if thou wilt lend a patient ear—
"Can well explain, although, in doing so,
"I must recall a history which, perchance,
"You deemed for ever hidden in the grave."
He signified assent, and she commenced:
"Some eighteen years ago, when thou hadst seen
"But twenty summers, a fair sister lived,
"Who—by a secret marriage, made with one
"Of lowly birth—incurred thy father's wrath,
"Which thou, irate with wounded pride, didst fan.
"Her child was taken from her; she, immured
"In convent walls: but, with a broken heart,
"Sank in the grave before a year had passed.
"Her husband—only guilty of the crime
"Of loving one of grade above his own—
"Was seized, and—on some false and groundless charge,
"Of thy devising—to the galleys sent.
"The brigand thou didst secretly engage,
"Thy luckless sister's offspring to destroy,
"Failed of his promise: for his rugged heart,
"By some unwonted touch of pity moved,
"Spared it; and placed it, in the dead of night

"Within the garden of an aged pair—
"Wealthy, but childless—where its piteous wail
"Compassion woke. They took the outcast in:
"Its beauty and deserted helplessness
"Won on their hearts: and when they quitted Rome—
"For they were only transient visitors—
"They bore it with them and adopted it;
"And for a distant relative it passed.
"But neither of its guardians lived to see
"Their much-loved foundling grow to womanhood.
"Though childless, they had many relatives:
"But, of their ample wealth, they did not fail
"To leave a portion to the orphan maid,
"From childhood just emerging. Of a friend
"Who knew her guardians she became the guest,
"And with them was invited to remain:
"And 'twas beneath their roof that first you met
"The beauteous Rosalie. She is thy niece."
She then arose, and, with a key that hung
Around her neck, unlocked a cabinet,
And took from thence some papers which she gave
For his inspection: and, as he perused
The documents, unwilling credence stole
Across his mind; while o'er his countenance
A ghastly pallor shewed that conscience's voice,
Stifled so long, at length his soul had pierced
With retributive pangs of just remorse
For those dark deeds of cruelty and wrong,

By pride of rank induced, which could not brook
What he esteemed a family disgrace—
Although a lawful marriage, and with one
Who bore a heart more noble than his own.
From that day forward, Devereux left the world:
And in a monastery, for a while,
Practised those self-inflicted penances,
Which Rome's deluded followers but too oft
Regard as an atonement for their sins,
Instead of looking to the Sacrifice—
Vicarious—which full satisfaction made
For our transgressions,—offered up by Him,
Through whom alone our souls can pardon find.
Yet, Devereux could not wholly lay aside
His love of this world's homage and esteem:
And fearing that his change of character
Might—in that world—awake suspicious thoughts,
He framed a tale which many credited,
And none could prove it false: for he affirmed
The Blessed Virgin had appeared to him,
Amid the solemn hours of silent night,
And bid him to renounce this empty world,
With all its fond affections, and to Heaven
And holy mother Church devote himself,
And thus secure eternal happiness.
As to the sacrifice of sacred truth—
Which this fictitious legend must involve—
He silenced conscience by remembering

That fraud, when practised for the Church's sake,
She deems no sin. When he, at length, emerged
From his retreat, he took upon himself
The priestly office, and at Rome remained
For some few years; but did not from the world
Entire seclusion seek, nor lay aside
All interest in its passing history—
As interwoven with his Church's aims.
Nor could he wholly banish from his mind
The image of the lovely Rosalie:
Though, ever selfish, even in his love,
He thought far more of his own blighted hopes
Than of her tender grief, for—though in years
So much her senior—she had loved him well.
She ne'er was told the story of her birth:
But taught to think the visit and command
Of Mary had the sacrifice required:
And seemed to acquiesce, whate'er she felt.
His last farewell, by letter, was conveyed,
Stating—he wished to spare himself and her
The anguish of a parting interview;
And earnestly exhorting her to seek,
In some retired convent's hallowed shade,
The peace which this vain world can ne'er afford:
And though she did not his advice accept
By choosing a long life imprisonment,
Yet, the sad trial to her soul was blest,
By leading her to turn her thoughts from earth,

And earthly love, to Him who changes not,
And, through the Saviour, seek the joys of Heaven.
Two years had nearly passed since they had met—
When, one calm evening, Devereux wandered, lone,
Absorbed in earnest thought—but not of her,
Nor aught connected with his former life,
But of the subtle projects which engage
The Order, who so long have wildly dreamt
Their mission is to subjugate the world—
Until he found himself within a spot
By trees enclosed, whose tranquil beauty seemed
For meditation formed: and as he paused
To gaze upon the scene, his startled eye
Fell on a female form which seemed to stand
As if contemplating the setting sun:
Her arms were folded, with a gentle grace,
Upon her bosom; and her beauteous eyes
With deep ethereal lustre softly glowed.
'Twas Rosalie!—"But how could she be there?"
Was his first thought—"And should he speak to her?
"He would,—he must." He moved towards the spot:
When lo! the phantom vanished from his sight
Like those illusive, spectral forms of light,
By modern art's ingenious skill produced.
He stood appalled, for o'er his soul there came
That sense of awe the supernatural
Must ever on the human mind produce:
And in his breast a sad presentiment

Of sorrow, which he could not chase away,
Was mingled with it—quickly realized—
For, but a few days afterwards, there came,
From one with whom he correspondence held,
The tidings that the gentle Rosalie,
Long drooping, had from earth been called away.
The writer named the very day and hour
In which she died—though wholly unaware
Of Devereux's vision—and they proved to be
The day and hour when she to him appeared.
Deem not as superstition's idle tales
Such instances—although mysterious—
Supported as they are, by countless facts;
Though neither science nor philosophy
Their cause can satisfactorily explain.
Whether from disappointment of the hopes
Ambition—not extinguished in his breast—
Had raised; or from the feverish restlessness
Which on a conscience-troubled mind attends,
We know not; but, at length, he quitted Rome
And came to Brussels, where he chanced to meet
His cousin Antoinette; and by her wish—
When she became the wife of Brieton—
Consented to locate within her house.
Now, Antoinette of Devereux's history
But little knew beyond the surface half,
Including that—which she accredited—
Of the Madonna's visit and command.

The prestige which this legend round him threw
Made Father Claude (the name which now he bore)
Esteemed, as one already canonized,
Both by herself and many of her friends:
And this impression—his imposing mien,
Reserved and stately, tended to confirm:
And to his counsel—which full oft assumed
The tone of a command—she ever paid
Implicit deference. But, unhappily,
Much of the stern and unrelenting pride
Which marked his character in early life,
Still unsubdued, within his bosom reigned.
He looked on those, who dare his Church oppose,
With wrathful hate; and hence the enmity
He long had borne to Willoughby Bellairs:
While Antoinette detested Catherine,
Though she had striven the feeling to control
Before her marriage; now she took less pains
To hide it, and unceasing efforts made
To weaken the remaining influence
Catherine might still possess o'er Brieton's mind.
And, in this strangely constituted world,
Guile and deceit, with all their cunning arts,
Will oft be found o'er simple truthfulness
To gain the advantage, since they scruple not
To call in flattery's soul-beguiling aid
To serve the purpose which they seek to achieve.

CANTO VIII.

EARLY FRIENDSHIPS.

SYMPATHY.

Gentle power, of sacred birth,
Sprung from realms 'twixt Heaven and earth,
In thine aspect ever shine,
Charms both human and divine.

Peasant's cot, and prince's throne,
Thy pervading influence own:
Every age and every grade
Needs thy humanizing aid.

Stern ascetics may declare
For thy presence nought they care:
Thou wilt leave them to their pride,
Loveless and unloved, to bide.

Gloomy, as the desert lone—
Cheerless, as the frigid zone—
Social life would soon appear,
Wert thou banished from its sphere;

For to joy thou add'st a charm,
And o'er sorrow shedd'st a balm:
Formed with those who thee disclaim
Friendship were an empty name.

"Pitiful and courteous be,"
Is the sacred Word's decree.
Gentle sympathy! 'tis thine
To fulfil that law divine.

Thou—obedient to its voice—
With the happy dost rejoice:
Nor the precept fail'st to keep,
Bidding us with mourners weep.

E'en the dumb creation's race
In thy tender thoughts have place;
Not the meanest thing can be
Overlooked or scorned by thee.

He, who deigned our woes to bear,
And our human feelings share,
Though His power from death could save,
Wept—when seeking Lazarus' grave.

Shall His followers, then, complain—
Though thou bring them transient pain?
How can hearts—unselfish—know
Perfect bliss while here below?

O! world, how strange is thy delusive power!
Scarce is one idol from the heart dethroned,
Before thy magic art supplies its place
With some new earthly object of delight,
Pursuit, or interest, to fill the void,
And heavenly things, too fatally, exclude.
When Denis Brieton first his Clarice lost,
He, for awhile, the sad bereavement mourned,
With grief sincere; but his was not a mind
For lasting sorrow formed: and 'twas not long
Ere Mammon o'er his soul began to gain
Its wonted influence, and his thoughts engross.
And Antoinette—to do her justice—strove
To cheer his loneliness with such success,
That eighteen months had not yet passed away
Ere gossips' whispers proved themselves correct,
And she became the wife of Brieton.
The influence o'er his mind she soon obtained,
We scarce need say, was earnestly employed

In furthering the interests of her Church;
Though, towards himself, she found it wisdom's part
Her proselyting zeal to keep in check.
The Father Urban had, with Antoinette,—
Though treated with respect—no favourite been;
For, though severe, he was by nature kind,
Sincere, and honest: nor could sympathize
In that duplicity which seemed to form
Part of her character; and hence, his death—
Which happened not long after fair Clarice
Was to the grave consigned—caused no regret,
To her, especially, as soon she hoped
To see his place supplied by Father Claude.
Brieton with her arrangements did not care
To interfere, although he never made
A friend or counsellor of one he knew
Looked on him as a Godless reprobate.
It was his wish that Thecla should be left
To choose her own religion for herself,
When old enough to make the preference;
And Antoinette professed to acquiesce
In this desire, but secretly contrived
His daughter's mind so deeply to imbue
With reverential awe of Father Claude
That Thecla, who by nature was inclined
To veneration, early looked on him
rdained by Heaven to be her guide;
ught on by his teaching—not unmixed

With warnings of the fearful consequence
Which would on its rejection surely wait—
Was led, or rather, morally compelled
To choose the Church of Rome, since he affirmed
In it alone salvation was secure.
For some time previous to Clarice's death
No friendship—scarcely e'en its outward form—
'Twixt Antoinette and Catherine was preserved;
But Brieton for his sister still retained
Sincere esteem: and when bereavement came,
And he perceived that Thecla, though so young,
Was drooping 'neath the grief her mother's death
Had caused, he signified to Antoinette
'Twas his desire that Thecla should accept
The invitation, given by Catherine,
To make a stay with her at Orton Lodge;
And Antoinette, who secretly aspired
To be the mistress of his heart and house,
Met the proposal with approving smiles,
Though much annoyed at what she greatly feared
Would tend to counteract her anxious wish
The mind of Thecla early to estrange
From her kind aunt, who loved her tenderly.
Passive and sad, the little maid was borne,
Escorted by her nurse, to Orton Lodge.
It chanced, the day she was expected there,
The sudden illness of a long-known friend
Had Catherine induced to leave her home,

Not to return until the ensuing morn;
And, as she knew it was a holiday
With Willoughby, she charged him to receive
His little cousin, and expressed a hope
That he would play the kind and courteous host.
But as the lady spoke, to her surprise,
She saw a gloomy cloud begin to lour
O'er the young listener's brow, while murmuring words
Broke from his lips: "And must he, then, forego
"His long-anticipated holiday"—
Which he and his companions had agreed
To spend in rambling to some favourite spot—
"To play the entertainer to a child?
"Why could not Emily (his mother's maid)
"Attend her wishes and supply her wants?
"What could he say to her, or how amuse?"
But Catherine, much displeased, in answer said,—
"Remember, Willoughby, that we are taught
"In Holy Scripture that we must not lead
"Selfish, but rather self-denying, lives;
"Following the pattern set us by our Lord,
"Who pleased not Himself, but sought our weal,
"Although it cost him dear. He, while on earth,
"For mourners felt, and bids his followers—
"Through his Apostles—'weep with those that weep,
"Nor cold unsympathizing hearts evince.
"Your uncle tells me that your cousin feels
"Her sad bereavement deeply—though so young.

"Should you, then, let your own enjoyments stand
"In duty's sacred way?" She paused, and saw
A conscious blush steal o'er his countenance,
As he replied, "Dear mother, I was wrong,
"For Thecla's sorrow claims my sympathy:
"And though I fear I have no power to soothe
"A grief like hers, yet, I will do my best."
"'Tis true, dear Willoughby," his mother said,
"That there are griefs which Heaven alone can heal;
"But few are wholly inaccessible
"To genuine sympathy's consoling power;
"And, where we can, we should essay to lead
"The mourner to the Throne of Grace, Divine,
"For consolation. Many a simple word
"Of Gospel truth hath been to sorrow blest."
When Catherine left, the youth became engaged
Collecting all the toys which once had pleased
His childhood, and revolving in his mind
How he might best amuse his gentle guest;
For she to him a stranger almost seemed,
Since Antoinette had usually contrived,
With some excuse, to keep her closely pent
Within the nursery when he had come—
Though 'twas but seldom—to his uncle's house.
The path of duty oft less painful proves
Than we had feared: and when his cousin came
Her lovely features—pale, indeed, and sad,
But deeply interesting—in his mind

Both admiration and compassion woke;
And that which he had deemed an irksome task
A compensating pleasure with it brought.
But when before her he essayed to spread
His toys, assuring her they should be hers,
She thanked him courteously, with gentle grace,
And tried to smile, but said—" I have not played
" With toys, nor even dressed my pretty doll,
" Since dear mamma was carried to the grave."
And then,—no longer able to conceal
The grief she struggled to suppress, in vain—
She sobbed and wept, while he stood silently,
Save a few words of sympathy sincere
Which seemed to soothe her: and, at length, she raised
Her eyes, and asked if of his father's death
He aught remembered? " Yes,"—he answered her,
And, in his turn, the tears of filial grief
Rose, with the recollection, to his eyes—
" I well remember him, and much I love
" His memory; therefore, I can feel for you,
" Dear Thecla." Then, he spake with earnest tone
Of our Redeemer's love and sympathy,
To which she listened with attention deep;
And when she grew more calm he brought a book,
Adorned with pictures, to elucidate
Some incidents of Scripture history,
[illegible]h she shewed an earnest interest
[illegible]eased him well, though much surprised to see

Her ignorance of sacred narratives—
To him familiar long—till he recalled
That she had been forbidden to peruse
That Holy Book, which he had been enjoined
To read, and make its study his delight.
Before the day had closed, he led her steps
To a fair garden which adjoined the house,
And from a little spot, he was allowed
To call his own, he culled a choice bouquet
To deck her bower of rest, to which, when night
Her sable curtain spread, his mother's maid—
The faithful Emily—conducted her
And every kind attention duly paid.
From that day forward—while at Orton Lodge
His gentle guest sojourned—his leisure hours
Were chiefly spent with her; and Catherine marked,
With joy sincere, the tints of health once more
Glow on her cheek and cheerfulness return.
But ah! those happy days soon reached a close,
For Antoinette some false pretext devised
To hasten her departure, to the grief
Both of herself and friends. In after years
Bellairs would oft recall, with much delight,
The happy hours with his fair cousin spent;
But Antoinette took care that ne'er again
Should he the pleasure of those days renew:
Nor dare she ask her father to allow
A second visit, for too well she knew

That it would Antoinette's displeasure wake,
Which she—with reason good—had learned to dread;
And Father Claude assured her that she owed
The same obedience to her stepdame's will
As her own much-loved mother would have claimed.
Nor did he scruple every art to use
To wean her heart from those dear relatives—
To whose remembrance he perceived it clung—
Calling them heretics—a fearful name,
To which her mind from infancy was taught
To associate all that's impious and profane—
And telling her 'twas sinful deemed by Heaven
Towards such to cherish even kindred love.
Bellairs and Catherine were well aware
Of his and Antoinette's insidious arts,
And could but fear that Thecla would imbibe
The prejudice her Church inculcated.
Catherine, though grieved, with patient silence bore
What she had long foreseen; but Willoughby
Could his indignant feelings scarce restrain,
For he was ardent and impetuous:
And when to manhood grown, with youthful zeal—
Which is not always as a serpent, wise—
Not only his antagonistic views
Towards Rome expressed with little of reserve,
But—grieved to see his uncle by the love
Of Mammon and its cares so much absorbed—
Would venture to suggest the solemn truth

(Embodied in the question of our Lord)
That it would nought avail to gain the world
If our immortal souls be cast away.
But though at times offended, Brieton saw
His zeal, if indiscreet, sprang from a mind
Sincere and conscientious, and esteemed
His character: nor was displeased to see
His worth, his talents, and his personal grace
E'en from the world appreciation met.
Towards Antoinette he ne'er could bring himself
To feign regard, and she was well aware
His uncle's choice was matter of regret
To him and Catherine: and revengeful hate—
By her esteemed a merit, as 'twas borne
Towards those who were her Church's enemies—
Had long been cherished in her wily breast,
Although, from policy, she still maintained
An outward shew of frigid courtesy.
After the visit to his mother paid
By his fair cousin, few and far between
Became the glimpses Willoughby obtained
Of her loved presence: and, as youth advanced,
Studies, profession, from home required
His lengthened absences, and brought their cares—
For towards a knowledge of the healing art
His inclinations had been early drawn—
But, mindful of his mother's widowed state,
Each interval his college terms allowed

Were chiefly spent with her. He often called
At Heathfield Villa, though he seldom saw
The gentle Thecla; for when she returned
From Orton Lodge, with childhood's innocence,
She often of her cousin Willoughby
With guileless pleasure spake, and Antoinette
Fearing their early friendship—should they see
Each other often—might to love expand,
And knowing Brieton was well aware
Bellairs would, one day, from his relatives,
Of wealth, most probably, become the heir—
(No trivial matter deemed in his esteem)
Was tortured with the apprehensive fear
An union 'twixt the cousins would, from him,
No disapproval meet: the thought to her
Was gall and wormwood. Hence, whene'er Bellairs
At Heathfield Villa his appearance made,
He was informed that Thecla was engaged
With music lessons, or was gone to call
On female friends, or service to attend
At the cathedral. E'en when he obtained
The pleasure of a transient interview,
'Twas always in her stepdame's presence held;
And though he thought her still more beautiful
Than e'en her childhood promised, 'twas with grief
He marked the air of almost cold reserve
Her manner wore: sad contrast to the look
Of sweet, confiding, tender innocence,

That then had graced her lovely countenan
And if the icy spell appeared dissolved
For one brief moment, and the gentle smil
Of by-gone days illumed her speaking eyes
He could perceive the glance of Antoinette
Fixed on her sternly, with upbraiding look
Which seemed to say, "Methinks you mus
"That he with whom you are conversing v
"Our holy Church with impious enmity,
"And, were it in his power, would gladly l
"Your soul from that blest fold to error's p
If this availed not, she no scruple made
Their converse to disturb with some remar
Or question, quite irrelevant, devised
Its subject to divert to other themes.
The hapless Thecla was too well aware
That at confession's hour she must endure
The warnings and reproofs of Father Claud
Who often told her that the nearest ties,
Whether of friendship or relationship,
Must, in the case of heresy, be held
As null and void if they should interfere
With that devoted, faithful loyalty,
The Catholic Church from all her members
Four years had passed since Thecla and Be
Had met, when Catherine from her niece r
The letter which, as told before, announced
Her visit. Tender memories of the past,

And sanguine hopes respecting the result
Of that expected visit, occupied
The mind of Willoughby, while wandering lone
The evening when he met with Irvindale,
Who also had his secret hopes and fears,
His joys and griefs, but had not, like Bellairs,
The solace sweet of trusting that in Heaven
He had a friend who for his welfare cared—
A Father reconciled—a Saviour, dear,
Able, alike, to aid and sympathize,—
Since He our sorrows with our nature took.

CANTO IX.

THE VANISHED DREAM.

Chains, dreary word!—which to the mind recall
  A thousand images replete with gloom,
Of prisoners, sad, immured in dungeon walls,
  Of serfdom's bondage and of slavery's doom.

But there are mental chains of subtler kind
  Than those in gloomy forge by labour wrought;
Chains which have power to subjugate the mind,
  And bind the energies of will and thought.

Stronger than adamant are oft the chains
  Which minds enslaved by prejudice enthrall:
Against her influence candour pleads in vain,
  And Reason's arguments unheeded fall.

How many look with supercilious pride
  On those whose lot is servitude and toil,
Who yet, themselves, in vassalage abide
  To this vain world, whose fetters round them coil.

The fear to deviate from its will and ways—
  In manners, sentiments, or even dress:
Its scornful smile, or withering frown to raise,
  Or arbitrary customs to transgress—

Has often thrown a paralyzing chain
  Of moral cowardice and misplaced awe,
E'en o'er the good, and tended to restrain
  Their due observance of Heaven's sacred law.

How sad their fate who dwell amid the night
  Of superstition's dark despotic reign,
Whose subjects are enjoined to shun the light,
  And count as sin the wish to break their chain.

And still more sad the bondage felt by those
  Within whose bosom evil passions sway,
Who—prayer ignoring—to the deadly foes
  Of man's salvation, fall the captive prey.

There is, of Love Divine, a holy chain
  Which binds the heart to its Redeemer's Throne:
They whom it graces other Lords disclaim,
  And He their faithful names will ne'er disown.

No trials that this mortal life attend,
  From earth, or hell, can break that sacred tie:
  'eath's dread power its precious links can rend,
  they shall wear it in the Realms on High.

Farewell, sweet maid! till life's last hour
  Thou wilt be dear to me,
Although I feel that evermore
  Our way must parted be.

E'en could thy heart my love return,
  The fond and fatal tie
Would each, ere long, in secret mourn,
  With unavailing sigh.

For error's dark, delusive chain,
  Thy captive mind hath bound:
Truth's sacred voice appeals in vain;
  Thou wilt not hear the sound.

I'd give my all for thy dear sake
  If that dread chain were riven;
But ah! its links no power can break,
  Save that which dwells in heaven.

'Twas with a beating heart—where hope and fear,
Sorrow and joy, alternately prevailed—
That Thecla left her home for Orton Lodge.
She would have been delighted with the thought
Of meeting those so justly dear to her,
But for the cloud which Father Claude had brought
O'er the glad feelings of her kindly heart,
By telling her it was a sinful joy,
Her visit as a pleasure to regard,
And that, if she were loyal to her Church,
She would but as a trial look on it.
He counselled her against the numerous snares
With which heretic minds too often strive
To lure unwary souls into their net.
" I know your father has requested you "
(He added) " to avoid what might offend
" Or pain your relatives. This may be well;
" But you must ever sedulously shun
" All conversation on religious themes,
" For 'twould be perilous for one like you—
" Unused to argue, more especially
" On controversial subjects—to attempt
" To cope with those whose study long hath been
" The faith of Rome's dear children to assail
" By subtle disputation, and appeals
" To Scripture, which they arrogantly claim

"To understand, without the sacred aid
"Of Holy Church as its interpreter.
"And should you find it would displeasure raise,
"If from their social worship you were found
"An absentee, you may your presence give
"In body, but endeavour to abstract
"Your mind, and sooner occupy your thoughts
"With trivial subjects than attention give
"To dangerous reading or heretic prayers."

It was with looks affectionately glad
That Catherine welcomed her beloved niece;
But Willoughby was grieved by the constraint
Which Thecla's manner towards himself evinced.
The once-loved child, was now a woman fair,
In whose expressive, lovely countenance—
Although more intellectual—he could trace
The same soft look of guileless innocence
And tender sweetness it had then displayed.
But in her form and movements now appeared
A graceful, but unstudied dignity,
Which charmed the eye and won upon the heart.
By slow degrees her cold reserve was dropt,
And the returning feelings of the past
Began to shed their influence o'er her mind,
Spite of the warnings given by Father Claude,
Whose visits—to the secret joy of all—
Had, by an unexpected incident,

As Antoinette informed them, been delayed.
Thecla and Willoughby would often stray
In that loved garden, where they once had passed
So many happy hours. 'Twas Summer, now,
And as he pointed out the pleasing change
Which cultivating art had in it wrought,
He ventured to refer to former days,
And found that she had not forgotten them.
Thecla admired the improvements, though in truth
She felt the spots most pleasing in her eyes
Were those in which she had been pleased to rest,
While he beguiled the time with pleasing tales,
Or gathered flowers, whose beauty, as revealed
By microscopic art, had charmed her much.
One evening, they had in a meadow strayed,
Adjoining to the grounds, when o'er the sky
Dark clouds, foreboding rain, began to lour:
And, suddenly, the lightning's vivid glare
Flashed on their startled eyes, while to their ears
The awful sound of pealing thunder came!
Thecla was terrified, and 'neath a shed
They sought a shelter from the heavy shower;
And, as they stood, she raised her beauteous eyes
Towards the dark sky, with looks of mournful dread,
As she exclaimed, "how awful is the sight:
"What then, may we suppose, will be the scene
"When Christ, in glory, shall to judgment come!"
Then, in a voice with deep emotion fraught,

She added, "Holy Virgin! for that hour
Prepare our souls."

Bellairs, with deep concern,
Heard this appeal, and ventured to reply,
"Alas! dear Thecla—what can it avail
"To pray to Mary, who, we are not told,
"Possesses e'en the power to hear our prayers,
"Much less to answer them? O! why not pray
"To Christ, through whom alone our guilty souls
"Can pardoning grace obtain? They who repose
"Their hopes on Him, need not that day to fear."
"But may not Mary's mediation prove
"Available with Christ, on our behalf?"
Said Thecla (for she had no promise given,
When Father Claude had argument forbidden).
"We need it not," he answered. "Can we think
"That He who, as a willing sacrifice
"For our salvation, gave Himself, can need
"A mediator to present our prayers
"To Him, or plead our cause? Where can we find
"In Scripture ought to sanction the idea,
"Or Mary place in that pre-eminence
"Your Church to her assigns? Do we not read
"That when our Lord was told His mother stood
"Waiting to speak with Him, He stretched his hands
"Toward His disciples, and exclaimed, 'Behold
"'My mother and my brethren,' and affirmed

"That they who do His Heavenly Father's will
"Are such in His esteem. Does not this shew
"That she, though blest, is not to be adored,
"Nor prayers, idolatrous, from us receive?
"The early Church no prayers to her addressed,
"That error (like so many in your Church),
"By slow degrees, a stealthy progress made,
"Sustained by priestcraft, and fanaticism."
Thecla, her mind bewildered and distressed,
At first was silent, but at length replied,
"Ere I left home, the Father Claude enjoined
"That I should not in argument engage
"With those who views heretic entertain.
"In truth, I am not equal to the task.
"I am not versed in controversial lore,
"Nor e'en in Scripture, for the Father says
"I might misjudge its meaning, should I read
"Its sacred pages without priestly aid,
"And that, whate'er instruction it contains,
"Which I require, the Church can well impart.
"Wherefore, I pray you, to abstain from that
"Which can but prove a source of pain to both."
With bitter disappointment and regret,
Bellairs perceived his fondly cherished hopes
Her mind to lead to Scripture's sacred light,
Were frustrated by priestly tyranny,
Which thus, with wily craft, had closed the door
To all attempts to benefit her soul.

But one last means of influence still remained;
For, by her father's wish, as told before,
She at their social worship still appeared,
And when her host the sacred volume read,
With all the solemn pathos of a heart
That felt the subject,—more especially
The history of our Saviour's life and death,
And holy teaching,—spite of Father Claude
And his instructions to abstract her mind,
She found it by a strong attraction drawn
Towards the subject, and at length gave up
The painful effort to divert her thoughts,
And listened with an earnest interest
Exceeding far what she had ever felt
For Romish legends of departed saints.
And when Bellairs his supplications poured
Before the Throne of Grace, she ventured, oft,
Not only to attend, but even join.
Time swiftly flew, and Thecla's mind became
Each day by ties of friendship and esteem
More closely towards her aunt and cousin drawn,
When, to the sorrow and surprise of all,
Appeared the unwelcome form of Father Claude.
He stated that a sudden call to Rome
Had, hitherto, compelled him to defer
His promised visit; adding—that, before
He quitted Rome, he had from Antoinette
Received a letter, saying she had been

A sufferer from illness, and required
Her much loved daughter's aid and sympathy,
Who would, she hoped, return with Father Claude,
The more especially, as they were now
Expecting visitors.

'Twas with a pang
Of undisguised regret that Thecla heard
The announcement, and the details it involved;
Whose truth she doubted (by experience taught).
That very night, she was compelled to hear
(While at confession) Father Claude's reproofs,
Mingled with fierce invectives against those
Who had, he said, been striving to allure
Her soul into perdition's fearful path;
And, ere he gave the absolution sought
By his fair penitent, he made her give
A promise, that, when parting from her aunt,
She would decline—should she proposal make
Of correspondence. On the ensuing morn
She took her leave of her kind relatives
At Orton Lodge. Catherine, with much concern,
Observed her pale, dejected countenance,
And of her health inquired. Her look, and tone
Of tender sympathy, touched Thecla's heart;
And, falling on the bosom of her aunt,
The weeping maiden told her sorrow's cause,
And of the promise to the Father given

That she the correspondence would decline—
Which had between them been agreed upon.
"Alas! my child," the lady gently said,
"Have you resigned your judgment, and your will,—
"Those onerous talents, for whose exercise
"We are accountable—to be the blind,
"Unquestioning slave of those who cannot prove
"Their title to Divine authority?"
"Ah! dearest aunt," the mournful Thecla said,
"They who, like you, the liberty enjoy
"Of reason's exercise, can scarce conceive
"The painful sense of bondage, felt by those
"Brought up, like me, to look upon their priest,
"As one by Heaven invested with the power
"Sins to remit, or to retain, at will;
"And, though I will confess that there are times,
"When, 'gainst the thraldom which encircles me,
"My heart is strongly tempted to rebel,
"And wonder whether Christ has really placed
"Such power in human hands,—I must repress
"The thought as sinful; for, should Father Claude
"The absolution which our Church ordains
"I, through his ministrations, should receive,
"Refuse to give me, I should feel to be
"An outcast from the love and grace of Heaven."
Catherine was deeply grieved, but as her lips
Essayed to make the suitable reply
Her heart dictated, interruption came

From a domestic, stating, Father Claude
For Thecla waited, who to both her friends
A mournful farewell bade, and for her home,
Beneath her stern conductor's silent frown,
Set forth, with heavy heart. But, when arrived,
She could not but remark that Antoinette
No outward sign of recent illness bore;
As to the visitors, she was informed,
Some circumstance their coming had delayed.
But, long innured to patient self-command,
She bore the trial meekly, though convinced
The illness was a stratagem, contrived
To tear her from her relative's abode.
We cannot say that Willoughby displayed
An equal resignation to his fate.—
Though Catherine strove to soothe him with the thought,
That many a precious seed the sower fears
Has perished from the earth, at length springs up,
And brings forth fruit—but lonely for a while
Appeared to him the home so lately graced
By Thecla's lovely presence. Catherine shared
In his regret, and when at evening's hour,
Within her chamber's silent solitude,
She told the beads upon her rosary,
The much-loved Thecla's name (recalled to mind)
Was breathed in prayer before the Throne of Grace,

CANTO X.

SECRET VISITS.

On guilty Israel's sad estate—
  To idol-worship given,
Deluded by a wicked king,
  Who braved the wrath of Heaven,
And its long-suffering grace abused—
The sightless Prophet sadly mused.

A female form, in mean attire,
  Towards his dwelling moved,
Who sought, with anxious heart, to know,
  The fate of one she loved.
Her veil and mantle hid a face
Still fair, a form of queenly grace.

But on her ear the Prophet's voice
  In startling accents fell—
"Come in, thou wife of Israel's king;
  "I know thine errand well.
"No vain disguise avails thee here—
"But ah! I heavy tidings bear."

Then he revealed the judgments, dire,
  Jehovah had decreed
To fall upon her husband's house
  For all his impious deeds.
And told, that as her feet drew nigh
The city gates, her child should die.

"Because, towards the Lord his God—
  "Though snares beset him round—
"A germ of Heaven-implanted grace
  "In his young heart is found,
"He shall not share his father's doom,
"But find an early, honoured tomb."

She bowed her head, with grief subdued,
  As from the Prophet's door
She passed; but, ere she reached her own,
  Abijah was no more!
And Israel o'er him mourned and wept,
But he, in peace, unheeding slept.

How fearful is Jehovah's wrath!
  How awful e'en his love!
The storms that lay the wicked low
  Oft bear the saints above.
Mercy, 'mid judgment, they descry
Like stars in midnight's gloomy sky.

She sought a prophet's aid, and yet returned
With heavy heart. What, then, may they expect,
Who, in the day of trouble, seek for aid
From impious wretches, who profess to hold
Communication with the Evil One?
E'en though the knowledge by such means obtained
Present relief may seem, at first, to bring,
The curse of wrath Divine on such attends,
Their woes to heighten and their joys to blight.
It hath been told that in the "Haunted House,"
Zatahra her appropriate dwelling fixed.
The rustic villagers, with shuddering dread,
Would cross themselves when, at the evening's hour,
They passed the place; but many watchful eyes,
And minds inquisitive, were exercised
In tracing those who glided through the gates,
And vanished 'mid the gloomy portal's shade;
Surmising who they were, and what might be
Their secret errand to the unhallowed spot.
One night, the Sorceress in her gloomy cave
Upon a tripod, near a table, sat—
On which were placed an ewer, and a vase,
And cabinet of ancient workmanship.
The bell tolled twelve: and she expected one
Who of her visit previously had given

An intimation, but had not revealed
Her name. A gentle rap, at length, was heard,
And, by the scowling porteress, she was shewn—
In silence—to the dark receiving-room;
And though enveloped in a mantle, coarse,
It could not wholly hide the striking grace
Its beauteous wearer boasted—in whose mien,
Although subdued, the imperious haughtiness,
Too long indulged—was still discernible,
As she the Sorceress accosted thus:—
" Rumour asserts that (wheresoe'er derived)
" Thou hast a power the future to reveal.
" Urged by the tortures of suspense, I come
" To seek the aid thou canst, perchance, afford,
" By telling me whether the relative—
" By illness to his chamber now confined—
" Will, to his anxious friends, be yet restored."
The Sorceress, with a scrutinizing glance,
While on her lip a smile sarcastic lurked,
Replied: " No doubt, Countess De Tracy's heart
" Must yearn to know her suffering husband's fate,
" And I will do what lies within my power
" The sad suspense to end, when thou hast paid
" The expected fee (from all, at first, received)."
The visitor complied, and wondered much
Her name and rank should be already known.
Meanwhile, Demonia, with her ebon wand
Aroused a snake—meet emblem of the form

The Tempter took our mother to beguile—
Which 'neath the table lay, as if asleep.
But now it raised its head, its folds uncoiled,
And towards Demonia moved; and, as she bent
Her head, it seemed to whisper in her ear
With hissing sound. The Countess, shuddering, gazed:
And though, when travelling in eastern lands,
She had been witness to the wondrous feats
Of serpent charmers, yet, she scarce suppressed
Her rising terror, to behold the scene
Which followed, as she watched the conference,
And saw the Sorceress suddenly start back—
Like one on whom delirium hath seized—
As she exclaimed, "Ah! yes, it is the day
"On which, to gratify my deep revenge,
"I sold myself to evil. Cursed day!
"And cursed be thou, who did'st my tempter prove
"To that dread deed. And dost thou tell me, now,
"That ere the sun hath risen I shall behold
"The offspring of the pair whose cruelty
"My maddened heart and brain to fury wrought?
"Begone!" And as she spake, she waved her wand,
The serpent on her fixed its fiery eye—
One moment—with a fierce, defiant glance,
Then, gliding slowly, vanished by the screen
Which hung behind the tripod, while the witch,
As if transformed to stone, in silence stood.
But soon recovering, from a cabinet

Produced two golden balls, in size and shape
Exactly similar—as it appeared
To Genevieve De Tracy, in whose hands
She placed them—saying, "If 'tis thy desire
"To penetrate the dark decrees of fate,
"Into this vase—thou see'st with water filled—
"Throw one of these, then pause, while counting seven:
"Then, cast the other in, and if the first
"Shall longest on the liquid surface float,
"Thy husband will survive; but, if it sink
"Before the other, know his doom is sealed."
While thus she spake, the Countess held the balls
Within her hands—but, ere Demonia ceased,
That which the right enclosed, appeared to grow
Lighter, while that within her left became
More heavy. With a beating heart, she paused,
Irresolute, then cast the heaviest in,
And counted seven—with voice scarce audible;
Then threw the other, with a trembling hand.
Both swam awhile; but on the first she kept
Her eye intently fixed, and soon beheld
It sink, and leave its fellow floating still.
Her cheek grew deadly pale, for conscience said—
"Murderess! thou didst desire thy husband's death,"
"Or thou the lightest ball had first thrown in."
While this was acting, with her magic books
Demonia appeared to be absorbed,
Then, to the agitated Countess said—

" We must submit to fate's severe decrees.
" But, I must warn thee that thy longer stay
" Might to detection of thy visit lead."
The Countess, hastily, her mantle drew
Around her form, then sought the ante-room,
Where her companion waited her return,
And both the Haunted House in silence left.
Zatahra hid herself behind the screen
Before described, through which she could discern
The second applicant his entrance make—
Whose presence by the serpent was foretold:
'Twas Irvindale, who previously had sought
The Sorceress' cave, but, having met Bellairs,
Postponed his visit till the shades of night.
He felt surprised that no one met his view,
And, to divert the restlessness that stole
O'er his impatient mind, turned o'er the leaves
Of manuscripts that on the table lay,
But found their characters resembled nought
That e'er had met his eye. " I hope," he thought,
" The Sorceress will not tax my patience long;
" I half repent, already, that I came;
" My wondering friends would scarce their senses trust
" Could they behold me in this dismal den:
" I, who a fable Satan's kingdom deem.
" But if my visit bring no good result,
" I trust 'twill bring no harm; unless, indeed,
" My nerves should suffer, if compelled to gaze

" Upon some fierce and hideous-looking hag,
" Like those Macbeth was favoured to behold."
While thus he mused, he raised his eyes and saw—
Emerging from behind the drapery—
A female figure, not devoid of grace,
Still handsome—though not young—but on whose brow
The gloom of dark and stormy passiôns loured;
Her dress was picturesque, resembling that
Of some Egyptian queen of ancient days.
She, through the screen, had watched her visitor
With earnest gaze, while muttering to herself:—
" Yes, to the cruel author of my wrongs,
" And victim of my vengeance, well I trace
" The strong resemblance; nor to him alone;
" For in that countenance methinks I trace
" The supercilious look of proud disdain,
" Which on his mother's handsome features sat,
" When she her menials ordered to expel
" That bold, disreputable vagabond."
For so she chose to call the gipsy girl,
Though, at that time, as virtuous as herself—
" Her influence led him to that last base act
" Of my imprisonment in the felon's jail,
" Which turned love's lingering spark to deadly hate,
" And, like a poisoned arrow, in my breast
" Awoke a thirst for vengeance nought could quench.
" Ah! haughty pair, how little did ye think

"The orphan, trampled on with ruthless scorn,
"Would influence your offspring's destiny!
"But he grows restless, and I must appear."
So, from her hiding-place she glided in
And stood before him; but she did not speak
Till he addressed her, thus:—"Thy fame has spread
"Through Brussels, and has brought me to thy cave.
"Perchance, thy skill already has divined
"The information sought." "Yes," she replied;
"Thou seekest to know if I can aught reveal
"Concerning certain documents—by thee
"Of value deemed—which, in a vessel sent
"From Ceylon, never reached thee: for the ship,
"O'ertaken by a storm, was wrecked and lost;
"But, of the freight a portion, by the waves,
"Was thrown upon the shore; and thou would'st know
"Whether the chest, which did thy papers hold,
"Was thus preserved, or perished in the deep."
"True," he replied. "If thou canst ascertain
"Such facts as will to their recovery lead,
"Thy guerdon shall be great." She answered not,
But rose, and from the brazen ewer poured
Into the vase a fluid of sable hue,
Whose surface soon grew smooth and bright as glass,
Then, bending o'er it with an earnest gaze,
She said: "I see a shore with fragments strewn,
"And plundering wreckers busy o'er their spoil.
"I see a chest of Indian workmanship"——

"I pray thee, let me see it for myself,"
Said Irvindale, with mind incredulous:
And, in his turn, he o'er the vessel bent
And saw the scene the Sorceress had described,
As he exclaimed: "Ah! 'tis my uncle's chest!
"A miscreant seizes it—he bears it off."
But from his eyes the vivid picture now
Began to fade; the liquid surface lost
Its smoothness, and in circles moved around.
"If I must see no more," said Irvindale,
"Tell me, at least, such details as will serve
"To ascertain the party, or the place,
"With whom, or where, my papers still remain."
Demonia paused, then said: "My power, though great,
"Is limited. The jewels and the shawl
"Thou hast not named—though with the papers sent—
"Perchance, ere this, have passed through many hands.
"The name of him who bore the chest away
"Is all I can reveal: he has no home,
"But leads a lawless and a wandering life;
"Whether thy papers—valueless to him—
"Have been consumed, or still preserved remain,
"I know not; therefore, leave me, now, I pray,
"For other applicants await their turn."
"Not so," said Irvindale, with clouded brow;
"For what avails it to be told my chest

" Was rescued from the waves, if thou withhold
" The information needful to regain
" My documents? Think not to trifle thus.
" The meagre details thou hast given me
" Are scarcely worth the risk I have incurred—
" Of taunting ridicule and censure, cast
" On those suspected to have sought thy den,
" And held communion with a creature deemed
" Accursed by the good of every grade."
Then, anger giving place to levity,
He added: " If our nursery tales be true,
" Thy sisterhood are wont, when storms prevail,
" On broomsticks (deemed their steeds conventional)
" To ride, at evening's hour, 'mid flitting clouds,
" O'er sea and land—by human eye unseen—
" And of the doings of this nether world
" A knowledge gain they turn to good account.
" Why could'st not thou an ærial journey take,
" And learn such details as would furnish me
" With a successful clue to my research?
" Methinks 'twere folly to have sold thyself
" To Satan, if the knowledge he bestows
" Is such as scarce will gain thy ill-earned bread."
The scornful laugh, and light sarcastic tone,
Which these contemptuous words accompanied,
Within the wretched Sorceress' breast awoke
A scorpion's sting, for they recalled to mind
The cruel taunts which, from his father's lips,

Had mocked her bitter grief—and trusting love.
She raised her eyes, which blazed with scornful rage,
Exclaiming—as she fixed them on his own—
"Cease thy insulting levity of tongue!
"For laughter suits not with this gloomy cave,
"Where things accursed dwell, and which thou sayest,
"Too truly, is ne'er entered by the good.
"But thou hast neither part nor lot with them,
"And it beseems not thee to vaunt thyself,
"As if polluted by thy entrance here."
"Whate'er my guilt may be, I never threw
"Contempt upon the followers of Christ—
"Nor on His Godhead, power, or sacrifice—
"As thou hast done. E'en 'devils may believe
"And tremble;' and when He on earth appeared
"They owned Him, as 'the Holy One of God.'
"And when we meet before His Judgment Throne,
"Proud unbeliever! thou, perchance, wilt find
"My doom will not be heavier than thine own."
The heart of Irvindale a moment quailed,
At meeting an accuser where he least
Expected it; but soon recovering—
"I own," he said, "I had not thought to hear
"A pious homily from lips like thine:
"It will be something new to think upon.
"However, let me hope you will essay
"Your utmost skill my papers to restore,
"And let me know the result. Meanwhile, take

"This present, as an earnest of the gifts
"Which thy success most surely shall reward."
"Curse on thee and thy gold," Zatahra said,—
Within her secret heart;—yet, by the bait
Enticed, she promised, though with sullen looks:
Then turned away, and vanished through the screen;
And Irvindale was by the porteress shewn—
Though by a different way from that by which
The cave he entered—to the gloomy porch.

CANTO XI.

IRVINDALE.

When the watchman on the tower
  Sees the foe approaching nigh—
Nearer drawing every hour,
  With his banner lifted high—

Should the warrior calm recline,
  In the tranquil bowers of ease,
'Neath his fig tree and his vine,
  Dreaming of millennial peace?

Superstition ever waits,
  Hoping, still, for Zion's fall:
Unbelief, with treacherous hate,
  Lurks within her sacred walls.

Christian soldiers, start and rise,
  Lukewarm sloth's cold fetters break,
To your Leader raise your eyes,
  And your heavenly weapons take.

If the Angel of the Lord
  Once such bitter curses laid
On the men who, to his sword,
  Brought no succour, sent no aid,

Will not His displeasure burn,
  If with Him you take not part—
If ye from the conflict turn,
  With a coward traitor's heart?

Light with darkness long hath striven,
  And the struggle ne'er shall cease
Till Messiah, Prince of Heaven,
  O'er the Earth shall reign in peace.

A FALLEN STAR.*

While gazing on a dark and cloudy sky,
  A glittering meteor burst upon my sight;
But as I viewed it, with admiring eye,
  It vanished, 'mid the mournful shades of night.

Then mused I on the meteor lights of earth—
  The worshipped heroes of an age, or day—
How few, alas! are stars of heavenly birth,
  Or shine with wisdom's true celestial ray.

* This piece was published about the time of the Geneva Congress.

I thought of one, whose patriotism sincere,
  And dauntless zeal, such admiration claimed:
Yes, star of Italy! all hearts revered
  Thy noble deeds—thy pure unselfish aim,

And deemed that he who bid the Gospel wake
  Its slumbering voice, believed it came from Heaven.
But ah! they found 'twas but for freedom's sake
  The approving charge was to Gavazzi given.

For, 'mid the assembly at Geneva held,
  Where scepticism abounds, yet, 'twas with grief
That many heard thee openly declare,
  Of Scripture's sacred truths thy disbelief.

Thy deity is freedom, for whose sake
  Thou didst insult the God whom angels fear,
Exhorting France an impious part to take,
  And—to her own disgrace—a statue rear

To one who God disowned, and braved His ire:
  Who Christ reviled, and was His bitter foe:
Whose tongue and pen by hell were set on fire—
  And souls, unnumbered, led to endless woe.

If France her atheist champion must recall,
  Let her depict him, prostrate, as he lay—
When doomed beneath Death's conquering power to fall—
  Of horror and despair the fearful prey.

And thou, his eulogist, canst thou complain,
  If righteous Heaven should thy fond projects mar,
And let adversity thy course restrain,
  To set in gloom, thou wildered wandering star.

O! Garibaldi, every lip and pen
Conspired to praise thee as a hero once;
But could the wise and good approve thy deeds,
When thou didst join with infidels,
In paying homage to the impious wretch
Who the Redeemer's holy name blasphemed?
And—had his power been equal to his will—
That Saviour's kingdom would have overthrown.
The reckless host of hero-worshippers
May laud thee still: but He who rules on high,
"A jealous God" proclaims Himself to be,
Who will the insults offered to His Son
Avenge, for He is "a consuming fire."

" Thank my good stars, I have escaped unhurt
" From that dread den, and that incarnate fiend,
" Who looked as though she would have strangled me
" With those long harpy hands—if in her power—
" For the few taunting words herself called forth."
Such were the thoughts of Ireton Irvindale
As from the Haunted House he took his way.
The moon had risen in spectral beauty pale,
For a thin shadowy cloud her light had veiled;
But soon it passed, and as he raised his eyes
To gaze upon the softly pensive light
Of her refulgent brow, it seemed to say,—
" And hast thou, then, forsaken Him who gave
" My orb to rule the night, to seek for aid
" From evil influence?" But thoughts like these
Were quickly stifled, and their place supplied
By musings on the probable results,
His visit to Demonia might produce;
Though only with the faint despairing hope
That snatches at improbabilities,
For Satan and his agents were, by him,
As fables deemed; and yet, he marvelled much
At what she had revealed: and of the power—
From wheresoe'er derived—she might possess
He made decision to avail himself,

But keep his visit secret from the world,
Though e'en its censure or its ridicule
Were preferable—to himself he said—
To the cold supercilious neglect,
Which poverty, though guiltless, often meets.
Ere Ireton Irvindale beheld the light
His father died—the sad mysterious death,
Already told. His mother soon returned
To the gay world, but did not long survive.
She was a member of the Romish Church,
As were her relatives, beneath whose care
His early days were passed. His father's wealth,
By gaming's fatal vice had been reduced.
When he to manhood grew, 'twas his desire
To be a soldier: for, in truth, he loved
The excitement of the camp, nor feared the field.
But, as his worldly portion was not great,
He—though reluctantly—this wish resigned
To please a kinsman of whose ample wealth,
It was expected, he would be the heir.
A fine exterior, joined to lively wit
And polished manners, favour soon obtained
In the gay circles where—once introduced—
He moved, admired and courted; yet, he formed
No friendships worth the name—for fashion's sphere
Is not the atmosphere where friendship thrives—
And Irvindale, though generous at times,
Had to the world and self—like many more—

His heart devoted, and his life was passed
Amid a round of gay frivolity.
That veneration for the Church of Rome,
By superstition taught, soon died away:
Yet, while belief in Revelation's truth
Remained, the voicé of conscience oft was raised
Against the lawless course of sinful joys
In which, ere long, he plunged—but all in vain:
For the strict precepts of morality,
By Christ and His Apostles ever taught,
He deemed a bondage unendurable,
And 'gainst the humbling doctrines of the Cross
His heart—encased in proud impenitence—
Rebellious rose; hence, he was soon induced
To lend an ear to those, who, not content
The yoke of superstition to renounce,
Prefer a heathenish philosophy
To Christianity's all sacred light.
And as the evil wishes of the heart
With fatal power the judgment oft pervert,
He heard their views with approbative ear,
And hoped—ere he believed—they might be true.
The leisure hours, from pleasure's round secured,
Were spent with writings of that dangerous class
Which science, learning, and philosophy
From blessings turn to bane, from friends convert
To enemies of man's eternal weal—
Arraying them, with subtle sophistry,

Against the sacred truths by Scripture taught.
"Blind leaders of the spiritually blind,"
These lying prophets prove; but oft succeed
In their invidious efforts to beguile
Unstable souls, and from the Way of Truth
To lead them into error's wildering maze,
Where oft they wander 'mid a chaos—wild,
Of speculation—lost: their fancy charmed
By each delusive ignis fatuus raised
By vain conceits of human intellect;
Or sink into the dark uncertainty
Of Pagan night, without its sad excuse.
The mind of Irvindale was predisposed
The statements of such writers to receive,
And with avidity perused the works
Which Scripture history as legends treat.
And (if they praise the character of Christ)
His Deity and miracles deny,
And God the Spirit deem but as a name.
How rapid is the downward course of those
Whose hearts depart from God! It was not long
Ere, from a learner, Irvindale became
A teacher in the school of unbelief;
And soon evinced the bitter enmity
Which they, who Revelation's Word reject,
Towards its sincere believers oft display.
With proselyting zeal, he now essayed
The faith and hope of others to assail—

Although acknowledging that faith and hope
Would neither mar their earthly happiness,
Nor break the peaceful slumbers of the grave.
The lively wit, his friends so much admired,
With satire's venom oft was interspersed;
And, as he knew sarcastic ridicule
Far more effective, with the many, proves
Than argument, he scrupled not to play
The scoffer's part, when it his purpose served.
His early wish to gain the glory, earned
By deeds of arms, had been (as we have told)
Repressed by circumstance; but, in his breast,
The love of fame still glowed, and he resolved,
Amid the literary world, to gain
Celebrity (but fame is hard to win).
So he decided to astound the age
By novel theories of startling name.
And though the glittering fabric be but built
On slight foundations, yet the magic skill
Of genius frequently contrives to give
Its wildest statements an imposing air;
And, when with sparkling eloquence adorned,
And clothed in mystic phraseology,
Such efforts, often, with the many, take,
And charm the more—the less they're understood.
And Irvindale triumphantly received
The praises, which the godless world bestowed,
Upon a volume, where the poison lay

Beneath a specious surface half concealed—
Like serpents lurking amid grass and flowers.
But what cared Irvindale?—although the wreath
He placed complacently upon his brow
Were twined by Satan's harpy hand, and stained
With blood of murdered souls, whom he must meet,
As his accusers, at the Bar of God.
Had he not name, and fame, and profit gained,
And saved himself the mortifying fate
Of sleeping with the undistinguished dead?
And though intrusive fears at times arose,
Their voice was quickly stifled, 'mid the whirl
Of giddy pleasures which encompassed him.
A wish for sympathy and fellowship
Is common to the evil and the good,
And Irvindale was soon induced to join
A social band, who met, at stated times—
Ostensibly for interchange of thought,
But whose real aim was 'gainst Revealed Truth
To wage unholy war. This band was formed
Of every hue and shade of unbelief—
From babes and sucklings, eager for the milk
Of sceptic lore, to infidels matured.
Nor was the class, whom Holy Scripture terms
As "fools"—who, in their impious hearts have said,
"There is no God"—unrepresented there.
Though, for the most part, these, a flimsy veil
Threw o'er their sentiments, perchance aware

They were not generally popular.
Much emulative rivalship prevailed
Among these lurid meteors, as to which
Should be, as intellectual orators,
The bright ascendant luminary deemed.
But 'twas not long e'er Irvindale obtained
Pre-eminence in popular esteem.
Besides the association here described,
There was a small, but brilliant, coterie,
Where woman lent her presence to the scene:
There, in each others' salons, ofttimes met,
And animated converse (interspersed
With music's strains) beguiled the passing hour.
Some writer says—a female infidel
A kind of monster in creation seems:
But many such, alas! were to be found
In these assemblies: some were talented,
While others by their grace and beauty pleased.
These reckless females, with approving smiles,
Oft countenanced the scoffer's wit profane,
Which should have met disapprobation's frown.
For O! how great, how fearful, woman's guilt!
When she exerts the influence given her
Over the mind of man, against her God!
(Reacting our first mother's direful part).
'Twas not long after Irvindale had joined
These meetings, that—all unexpectedly—
A change came o'er his fortunes, and his thoughts;

And of adversity's embittered cup
He was compelled to taste. The kinsman died,
Whose wealth he looked on almost as his own,
When lo! (prosperity's bright dream to mar),
A claimant, both unlooked for, and unknown,
His right disputed, and appeal to law
Inevitable seemed, unless, indeed,
He could produce a certain document,
Which in a chest from Ceylon had been sent
With other papers; but, unhappily,
The vessel which contained them had been lost;
And though a slender portion of the wreck
Was cast upon the shore, yet of the chest
He had no tidings gained. At first, 'tis true,
He had not greatly cared, imagining
Its loss would of no serious import prove;
But now, 'twas feared, it would: What could he do?
His heart within him sank; he could not look
For help to Him, in whom believers trust,
In sorrow's day, so—though opposed to all
His boasted disbelief of things unseen,
Yet superstition, spite of pride, obtained
An entrance to his heart, and, by it urged—
He sought the Sorceress' unhallowed aid.

CANTO XII.

GENEVIEVE.

TEMPTATION.

"Lead us not into temptation."
  O! how needful is the prayer,
Which the Author of salvation
  Taught us, in his gracious care.

He, a conqueror, great and glorious,
  Felt our griefs and knows our fears;
He o'er Satan proved victorious,
  Though it cost Him blood and tears.

Souls sincere, His succour needing,
  In affliction's furnace tried,
He for you is interceding
  At His Heavenly Father's side.

They who, proudly self-relying,
  Madly brave temptation's power,
Oft—like Peter, Christ denying—
  Fall in trial's fearful hour.

"Lead us not into temptation:"
  Thou, who bidd'st us use the prayer—
Gracious Author of salvation—
  Take us to Thy guardian care.

O! self-deception—subtle power—
  How potent is thy sway!
What varied phases dost thou wear,
What specious guises, false and fair,
  To lure to error's way?

When inclination wages war
  With duty's sacred right,
How oft thy treacherous arts avail
To spread a dark, obscuring veil,
  O'er conscience's faithful light.

How few in truth's impartial glass,
  Their characters survey,
How few their aims and motives trace,
Or ask the aid of Heavenly grace
  To understand their way.

Among the brightest of the female stars,
Who graced the soirées to which Irvindale
No difficulty found to gain access,
Was Genevieve De Tracy, who had made
Her first appearance 'mid those godless scenes
Some time before his introduction there;
And greatly was he struck when first he saw
That form of beauty, with majestic air—
In splendid robes and decked with costly gems—
Move gracefully (by every eye admired).
And yet, her charms were not of that high class
Which minds of elevated taste prefer:
A graceful figure, features classical,
With brilliant eyes, and lips of coral hue—
And all the other agréments which form
Unquestioned claim to beauty, physical—
Were hers. But there are minds which chiefly prize
The fine expression of a countenance,
Which bears the impress of a heart where truth,
Goodness, and sensibility reside;
But they, for such, in beauteous Genevieve
Had looked in vain. They were not pictured there.
For of the vain and pleasure-loving world
She was—and looked; her features, in repose,
Wearing that cold and supercilious air

The proud and worldly as no blemish deem.
Her character had hitherto remained
Unsullied, though by many a dangerous snare
Surrounded, and without the sacred guard
Which piety to modesty supplies.
A few years since, she had her hand bestowed
On Count De Tracy—more than twice her age—
But handsome, wealthy, and to fashion's sphere
Belonging; but—if gossips were correct—
A cold, a faithless, and tyrannic spouse.
In early life she mourned a mother's loss,
With grief sincere. Had that fond mother lived,
To train her up, the misled Genevieve,
Perchance, a different character had proved.
But when she died, her father to the care
Of nurse and governess consigned his child,
Content to hear she rapid progress made
In those accomplishments to females taught.
But scarce two years elapsed before he made
A second marriage. 'Twas with smiles he told
The unwelcome tidings to his daughter's ear,
That to his lonely home he soon should bring
A bride, whom she must, thenceforth, look upon
And honour as her mother, friend, and guide.
But flowing tears, and looks of sullen grief,
Were all the answer Genevieve returned.
And though, before the dreaded day arrived,
She schooled her mind to more propriety,

Yet, her stepmother in her manner saw
Displeasure and aversion lurking still;
And soon perceived the child regarded her
As an usurper of her mother's place,
Whom she was not disposed to love, or trust,
Or willingly obey.

Ye who assume
The onerous charge a stepdame's post involves,
O! bear in mind, 'tis scarcely possible
That ye can feel the tenderness and love
Maternal instinct brings; and if ye err,
Let it be rather on the safer side
Of kind indulgence, than severity.
Unhappily, Honoria did not try
Those gentle and conciliating arts,
Which Genevieve's dislike, perchance, had changed
To grateful love; and hence, it was not long
Before their mutual alienation led
To discord—which increased, when Genevieve
Beheld an infant sister, who became
Her mother's idol, and for whom she strove
To gain that place within the father's heart
The orphaned Genevieve had once possessed,
Who soon perceived the change with jealous eye,
And on the little Adeliza looked
As a supplanter, by Honoria taught
To rob her of her only parent's love.

With this resentful feeling in her breast,
She grew rebellious and intractable,
Until Honoria, at length, complained
To Count St. Surle—her husband—that her life
Was much embittered by the frowardness
And disobedience of his eldest child.
Peace to preserve, the father judged it best
That to a fashionable boarding-school
She should be sent: nor did she mourn the change.
There she remained—save at the holidays—
For several years, and when she quitted it,
Was, by a female friend and relative,
To gay society soon introduced,—
In which it was her father's sanguine hope
Her striking beauty quickly would obtain
An eligible offer; for, of late
He had considerable loss sustained
From adverse circumstances. Hence, he told
His daughter, that 'twould not be in his power
To give the dowry which he once had hoped,
And bid her from romantic feelings guard
Her heart, and no encouragement bestow,
Except on such, as wealth could offer her.
And Genevieve's ambition seconded
Her father's counsel. But two years elapsed
Ere she secured a prize: until, at length,
The Count De Tracy came upon the scene.
He had from India, not long since, returned,

Of ample wealth possessed. Fair Genevieve
His fancy charmed; and, with her conquest pleased,
She lent to his devoirs a willing ear,—
For, though she did not love, she did not hate;
Nor was her heart, as yet, pre-occupied.
Hence, she regarded with complacency
An offer which, at least, would set her free
From her stepmother's influence and control,
And promised her a home, where she might hope
For all that wealth and splendour can bestow.
No strict enquiry—either by herself
Or by her worldly parent—e'er was made
As to the principles or moral worth
Of Count De Tracy; but her father's care
Was prudently exerted to secure
A handsome settlement for Genevieve.
Much pomp and splendour graced the nuptial day;
And when the wedding tour had reached its close,
He took her to a handsome mansion, graced
With all the luxuries that wealth procures,
At Brussels, where she soon became immersed
In gay frivolity's unceasing round.
Proud of the beauty of his youthful bride,
The Count, at first, all kind attention seemed;
But love's romance, when based on outward charms,
Is oft as transient as a summer's day.
And Count De Tracy's mind was of the class
Where true affection seldom finds a place,

For he, from youth, had been a libertine,
And to unhallowed passion's guilty haunts
He soon returned: and, ere a year had pass'd,
The hapless Genevieve her folly saw,
And found herself that sad and lonely thing—
A slighted wife. In every phase of life,
'Tis hard to find the merit, or the charms—
Which strangers praise—neglected or despised
By those who should appreciate them most;
And her proud heart the trial ill could brook.
'Tis true she did not feel the painful change
With the keen anguish that affection does,
When its fond hopes are withered by the blight
Of cold inconstancy; but, in her breast,
Resentment, deep, glowed like a secret fire.
If he had proved a kind and faithful spouse,
The beauteous Genevieve had made resolve
To love him—if she could—and strive to act
The duteous wife; for, from her youthful heart,
The sentiments her much-loved mother's voice,
Long silent in the grave, had once instilled,
Had never been entirely effaced.
But this last germ of promise in her soul,
Her husband's evil influence destroyed;
For though, from policy, he still preserved,
With Rome's exacting Church, an outward shew
Of reverence and e'en conformity,
He was an infidel, and took delight—

Like Irvindale—in striving to subvert
The faith of others in religious truth;
And Genevieve—who of those sacred truths
Had ne'er been taught, e'en in their simplest form,
The evidences, fell an easy prey
To specious and sophistic arguments:
The more so, as the world had been her all,
And, by its influence, ossified her heart,
And barred all entrance to the things unseen.
Her reckless husband left her to herself,
And to the female friend and confidant,
Who, ere her marriage, was her chaperon.
'Twas by this lady she was introduced
To the reunions, before described,
Where first she met with Ireton Irvindale,
On whom her beauty and vivacity
A deep impression made: nor did he strive
His passion to repress, for by his code
The marriage tie no sacred thing was deemed.
The admiration which his varied gifts
Gained from the circle, gay, 'mid which he moved,
Made him its bright presiding genius,
And gave a double value in her eyes
To his attentions. Flattered vanity—
At first her only feeling—led, at length,
To other and more dangerous sentiments.
She called it friendship—stilling conscience's voice
By firm resolves she ne'er would deviate

From virtue's path;—but thought she was not bound
To play the scowling prude to Irvindale,
Whilst her unfaithful husband roved at will
In guilty pleasure's maze; and, with this plea,
She Irvindale's attentions still received,
And often listened, with complacent smile,
To language which—although not definite—
Seemed more appropriate to a lover's lip,
Than prudence or propriety permit.
And though the fashionable world allows
A dangerous latitude, yet, many marked
What they flirtation called, with watchful eye,
And erred not on the side of charity,
In their construction of appearances.
At length, a rumour reached her husband's ear
Which roused, at once, his pride and jealousy.
With bitter taunts and angry looks, he charged
The thoughtless, though not guilty, Genevieve
With light imprudence, which had on her brought
The censures which—he said—disgraced her name.
Now Genevieve might, possibly, have borne
Reproof from one regarded with esteem,
But harsh and scornful language from the lips
Of him, who she had reason to believe,
His marriage vows had broken long ago,
Was not to be endured. Her temper rose,
And she retorted in no measured terms:
For it had chanced that on the previous night

She—'mid the guests at some assembly—met
The fair Louise (to whose alluring charms
The Count, 'twas said, was not insensible),
And, round her swan-like neck and snowy arms,
The startled eyes of Genevieve beheld
Some costly ornaments which, as she knew,
Had lately, by a female relative,
Been to De Tracy left, and she had hoped
That—since no open rupture had occurred,
As yet, between them—he would to herself
The baubles have presented, as a gift
Meet for her birthday, which was nigh at hand.
Her heart with jealous indignation swelled,
As in her rival's eye she saw the spark
Of triumph shine. Yet, she had never charged
De Tracy with the slight: for, hitherto,
Prudential reasons led her to endure
Her wrongs,—nor for a separation seek.
But now, the latent wrath, so long suppressed,
Burst forth without control:—contentious storm
Rose high between the pair, and left behind
A fearful wreck; for words had utterance found,
Which could not be forgotten or forgiven,
On either side, by hearts whose natural pride
Had never been subdued by grace divine.
To end the perilous acquaintanceship,
The Count removed the unwilling Genevieve
From the gay scenes which formed her happiness,

To spend some months within his old chateau,
A few miles distant. While sojourning there,
An accident—at first, but trivial deemed—
His stay prolonged, and threatened a result
From which he shrank: for e'en the infidel
Can seldom realize the near approach
Of death's appalling form without dismay.
And 'twas while lingering in this dread suspense—
Which, acting on a temper never mild,
Increased irascibility produced,
And worse than dreary made the lives of all
Within the chateau walls compelled to stay—
That Genevieve, unknown to him, contrived
To pay that visit to Demonia's cave,
Whose object and result, have been detailed.

CANTO XIII.

THE SOIREE.

SMILES.

How bright the smiles of April days,
  Though seen through glistening showers!
And Summer's, that with genial rays
  Calls forth her fruits and flowers.

E'en Autumn's tender farewell smile,
  Hath many a pleasing charm—
Whose soothing power can care beguile,
  And shed o'er grief a balm.

But ah! upon the human face
  Smiles are not always fair,
Too oft they breathe no gentle grace,
  No kindly import wear.

There is a smile of scornful pride,
  Of arrogancy born:
There is a smile that malice hides,
  By cruel satire worn.

The worldling's smile, so coldly gay—
  That gilds a selfish heart—
Like sunbeams on a winter's day,
  No genial warmth impart.

But sweet the smiles when kindred meet,
  To whom the tie is dear;
Or faithful friends each other greet
  With sympathy sincere.

There is a smile of holy joy,
  That triumphs over pain,
'Tis seen when saints and martyrs die,
  Who feel that "death is gain."

Though mournful be the smile that beams
  In pity's tearful eye,
It wears a charm that fancy deems
  Might grace the forms on high.

The smile that Christian love imparts
  Will speak the Christian mind,
And prove the index of a heart
  Whose thoughts are good and kind.

UNBLEST PROSPERITY.

Better the humblest meal, where love is found,
  Than sumptuous feast, where secret hate presides;
Better a little, by the good possessed,
Than wealth of godless men, by heaven unblest,
  And on whose ways its just displeasure bides.

Unblest prosperity!—what art thou like?
  Thou art like funeral torch, whose lurid glare
Illumes the scene, but cannot cheer its gloom:
  Or like the ignis fatuus—false and fair—
  Dancing o'er treacherous quagmire's fatal snare,
That lures some heedless traveller to his doom.

Thy cup is poisoned: weeds of gaudy hue—
  But fatal scent—twine 'mid thy chaplet flowers,
And at thy banquets, as in Egypt's halls,
A ghastly form—though veiled—the heart appals,
  And speaks of death amid life's gayest hours—

To those whose hearts to this world fondly cling,
  While, 'mid the pauses of sweet music's strain,
Unearthly voices steal upon the ear,
And sounds, portentious, tell of grief and fear
  To those who God forsake for idols vain.

"I will your blessings curse," is the dread threat
  The Almighty uttered in the days of old.
He changes not, and if from Him we rove,
  Whate'er the earthly joys He may bestow,
  Our happiness is but disguised woe.
What are His gifts without the Giver's love?

Once more, prosperity's returning beams
O'er Irvindale their cheering influence shed.
The information by Zatahra given,
With some details subsequently obtained,
Afforded to his anxious search a clue
Which proved successful. With exulting joy,
He found himself again of wealth possessed,
And tried to think himself a happy man.
But in his heart he failed to realize
The dream of happiness, though to the world—
Which met him with congratulating smiles—
He might appear, 'neath its illusion, blest.
But one portentious word would on his soul
Unwelcomely intrude, and mar his joy;
That word was "Death."—Dread word! which e'en
  the good—

In those depressing hours, when faith is weak—
Can scarce without a shudder realize.
No wonder that the heart of Irvindale
Should sink, when he recalled that howe'er long
The vista bright of promised happiness
Might, in perspective, seem—yet death, at last,
Must end each earthly joy and earthly hope.
Nay,—truth to tell—he would have given much
To have felt certain that oblivion's shade,
Though dark and cold, was all that would succeed:
But, death's dread secret none return to tell;
So how could he be sure what it might prove?
To banish thoughts like these, he did his best,
By mingling in those scenes of gaiety
But too well fitted serious thoughts to chase.
He knew not that his marked attentions paid
To Genevieve had roused De Tracy's ire,
And trusted that the Count would soon be tired
Of country scenes, and quit his old chateau.
But soon, the tidings of his dangerous state
Was followed by a rumour, no less true,
That infidelity had failed to prove
Meet solace, in the near approach of death,
And that—confronted by eternity—
He had availed himself of priestly aid.
At length, the solemn bell was heard to toll,
And, with imposing pomp, the funeral rites
Consigned De Tracy to the silent tomb.

But o'er that tomb no tender tears were shed,
By sorrowing friendship or domestic love.
Nor had the poor a benefactor lost.
The Church, indeed, had not forgot to claim
Remuneration from the penitent,
For absolution at the eleventh hour,
And showed its gratitude by masses said
For his departed soul—but this was all.
The heart of Genevieve, indeed, was sad;
But 'twas remorse, and not affection's pang.
The feebly kindled spark which once, perchance,
If cherished, might to faithful love have risen,
Had, by unkindness quenched, been long extinct.
Yet, conscience in that solemn hour awoke,
And to her soul recalled the guilty wish
That prompted her to seek Zatahra's cave,
And in the vase the heaviest ball to throw.
And though she felt from tyranny released,
A sense of loneliness oppressed her heart;
For since her father's death—which had occurred
Nearly two years before—all intercourse
'Twixt her stepmother and herself had ceased;
And from her sister she was still estranged.
Soon as the funeral obsequies were o'er,
Misgiving fears began to cross her mind
Lest slanderous whispers, touching certain points
Which seemed mysterious in her husband's death,
Should credence gain with those who were aware

No tender fellowship betwixt herself
And Count De Tracy dwelt.

This painful thought—
Though conscious she was wholly innocent
Of any secret practice on his life—
Preyed on her soul, and, 'neath its influence,
She deemed it prudent strictly to preserve
An outward form of sorrow and regret,
And for six months in deep seclusion live,
Which Madame St. Anaud agreed to share.
But scarcely had her solitude commenced
Ere Irvindale a fond epistle penned,
Which (though in passion's ardent language couched)
Did not the lady altogether please.
Its prematureness might have been forgiven,
But both herself and Madame St. Anaud
Traced in its style the easy confidence
Of one who deemed his love too great a boon
To fear rejection, least of all from her,
Whose heart he deemed already was his own.
"How different" (thought the offended Genevieve)
"Is this presumption from the deference shewn
"When first he paid his homage at my shrine.
"If I had promised that—should fate's decree
"Ere put it in my power—I would be his,
"He might have stood excused: but 'twas not so."
She, therefore, wrote a few repressive lines

Declining the requested interview.
But sad and tedious—though self-imposed—
Appeared the weary days that slowly passed
In this retreat, to one whose element
Had been, so long, the gay exciting world:
For, on the past thrown back, reflection brought
No self-approving reminiscences.
And if e'en Irvindale, 'mid pleasure's round,
Could not forget that life must have an end,
No wonder Genevieve, from day to day
Immured where death its traces still had left,
Should feel its presence press upon her heart.
Yet still she clung to infidelity,
And could not bear the self-abasing views
Salvation, through the cross of Christ, involves.
Her light companion, Madame St. Anaud,
Used every effort to divert her mind
From serious thoughts and lead it back to earth;
And for that purpose, she contrived to gain,
Of what was passing in the outer world,
Much gossip, which—with lively grace detailed
To Genevieve—amused the passing hour.
Meanwhile, the disappointed Irvindale—
Whose self-complacent vanity was piqued
By Genevieve's repressive answer given
To his effusion—did not feel inclined
To play the lonely hermit for her sake,
But made resolve such solace to obtain

As pleasure and society could give.
He knew he should be deemed a welcome guest
In many a family, and though he missed
The beauteous Genevieve from those gay scenes
Her presence had so recently adorned,
Self-love—the ruling passion of his soul—
Was gratified by many a fair one's smile
Who would, as he surmised, have gladly filled
Her place within his heart. None had, as yet,
Succeeded; but his frequent visits paid
To Count Du Bois' attractive family
Was noticed: he their friendship first had formed
At those assemblies previously named.
Countess Du Bois was of Honoria
The sister, and fair Adeliza's aunt,
And shared their feelings toward Genevieve.
One evening, Irvindale engaged to join
An evening party, where he hoped to meet
The lively Countess and her daughters—three.
They had not yet appeared when he arrived,
And 'gainst a pillar, near the folding doors,
He placed himself, and watched the entrances
Of various groups, though 'twas not with the eye
Of kind benevolence, for he was one
Of those who in sarcastic ridicule
A heartless pleasure take. Beside him stood
One of congenial mind. The scene was gay;
And, if the smiles of mirth were truthful signs

Of genuine gladness, 'twas a happy one,
For smiles were rife; but some were but a veil,
Which heavy hearts concealed, while—sad to say—
Too many were of that unlovely cast
Which rather tend to chill than cheer the soul.
At length, the Countess and her friends appeared.
Among them was a young and lovely girl,
Who his attention quickly riveted,
For she, he thought, a striking semblance bore
To Genevieve De Tracy, though her form
Had not the Countess' height, nor queen-like air.
While undecided whether he should join
The group immediately, two ladies—dressed
In fashion's height, though neither young nor fair—
Who near him sat conversing, uttered words
Which his attention drew, for one exclaimed—
Her friend addressing:—" Can you tell me who
" May be that lovely creature, standing near
" Amy Du Bois?" " I can," was the reply.
" She is the sister—rather, I should say,
" Half-sister—of the Countess Genevieve,
" (The widow of De Tracy) who—'tis thought
" By some—is far from inconsolable,
" Although she deems it prudent, for awhile,
" Her charms to bury in seclusion's shade,
" And thus, an outward shew of grief maintain.
Some think the sisters to each other bear
strong resemblance; though the Countess' form

"Is more majestic—with imposing air."
"I quite perceive the likeness," said her friend.
"Pray is she, now, her sister's visitor?"
"No," said the elder lady; "much, you know,
"Belongs to everything: and rumour says
"That Genevieve has, since her father's death,
"All intercourse with her stepmother shunned,
"And e'en the claims of sisterhood ignored;
"She looks on Adeliza with dislike,
"As a supplanter, who, in early life,
"Her image banished from her father's heart.
"'Tis always thought the discord, which prevailed
"From childhood 'twixt Honoria and herself,
"Induced her to accept De Tracy's hand."
"'Tis very probable," her friend replied.
"I've heard they did not live on cordial terms,
"And that the Count was jealous: some, indeed,
"Have hinted—though, I trust, there is no truth
"In such surmises—that her husband's death"——
But here the lady's voice became so low,
That e'en the strained ear of Irvindale
Could only catch unfinished sentences,
Which seemed some startling import to convey.
But while he strove, in vain, to ascertain
What her communication might involve,
An interruption came, for, towards the pair,
A lively form, approaching, rallied them
On their mysterious and solemn looks,

While Irvindale, much vexed—although he tried
Their gossip to despise—now sought to join
Countess De Bois. The party greeted him
With smiles, and he was quickly introduced
To their fair cousin: and the pleasing flow
Of lively converse chased the painful thoughts
Which to his mind had risen, and long before
The evening closed his mind became absorbed
By Adeliza's captivating charms,
While she—who had his praises often heard
From her young cousins—with approving eyes,
The pleasing stranger viewed; and his discourse—
For he was eloquent—her fancy charmed.
That night, or rather, the ensuing morn,
The sleepless Irvindale his thoughts employed
Drawing comparisons 'twixt Genevieve
And Adeliza. Even in his sleep,
Two beauteous phantoms seemed, alternately,
To flit before him; but he thought the one
Which bore the striking form of Genevieve,
Swept past him with a proud resentful air,
As if she read his fickle heart, and knew
That Adeliza—seen but for a night—
Had in that heart already gained a place,
And left an impress deeper than her own.
But so it was: and he resolved to call,
Without delay, upon the relatives
Of his new idol. As to constancy—

'Twas scarce esteemed a virtue in his eyes;
And Genevieve's epistle—beneath which
His pride still writhed—he deemed a just excuse
For transfer of his love. But selfish hearts
Will ever follow inclination's voice.

CANTO XIV.

THE ENGAGEMENT.

JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER.

O! cease my father, cease to press
That vanished claim on me;
A shroud will be my bridal dress,
If doomed to part from thee.

My mother in the tomb is laid,
I am but left thee now,
And my betrothal—early made—
I deem no binding vow.

'Twas cancelled by the hand of death,
When on the bed of pain
I struggled hard for life and breath,
But felt the struggle vain.

I cannot, e'en to thee, reveal
  What passed when life had fled;
My lips have worn oblivion's seal
  Since risen from the dead.

Yet, flitting memories come and go,
  Of angels, bright and blest,
By whom my parting soul was borne
  To realms of heavenly rest.

But, O! a voice, ne'er heard in vain,
  With sweet, yet awful tone,
Recalled it back to earth again,
  From regions still unknown.

My clay-cold form, at His command,
  To life became restored:
I saw a form majestic stand—
  'Twas Israel's King and Lord!

Though now in heaven, our hearts He claims:
  On earth, I love but thee,—
Then cease, my father, cease to name
  That severed tie to me.

THE ÆOLIAN HARP.

I heed not science's stern command,
  And scorn the rules of art:
Nor ask the aid of human hand
  For power to touch the heart.

Ethereal influences to me
  That sacred power have given,
Like feathered minstrels, wild and free,
  Whose songs are taught by heaven.

'Neath glaring summer's sultry ray,
  In silence, sad, I bide,
Like hearts that from the glad and gay
  Their feelings seek to hide.

But oft, at midnight's silent hour,
  All lonely and unseen,
Full many a plaintive strain I pour
  To its refulgent queen.

The solemn night-breeze, sweeping by,
  Descends my strings to kiss,
While sleepers wake to breathe a sigh,
  Then dream of heavenly bliss;

Or gaze upon the starry skies,
  While listening to my voice:
For I with grief can harmonize,
  And with the glad rejoice.

While listening to the sweet Æolian harp—
Which, near the oriel window of her bower,
Breathed to her ear its soul-entrancing strains—
The thoughts of Thecla strayed to Orton Lodge
And its dear inmates; but she checked them soon,
As she recalled the admonition given,
With stern severity, by Father Claude.
Some weeks had now elapsed since—with a heart
Where grief and indignation, mingled, rose
Rebellious—she had left her relatives.
Nor did it tend those feelings to allay,
To think that Antoinette had stooped to play
A part deceptive, merely for the sake
Of tearing her away from those she loved.
She half repented of her promise given
From intercourse, by writing, to abstain.
No wonder, by conflicting feelings torn,
Her mind became depressed; but Antoinette

No kind inquiry made, for she surmised
That Willoughby an interest had gained
In Thecla's gentle heart. This thought, to her,
Was gall and wormwood; for she long had borne
Towards Willoughby Bellairs a secret hate,
And would much rather Thecla have beheld
Robed in a winding-sheet, than as his bride.
Thecla, of earthly bliss had little known,
Though young and fair. Her mother's death had spread
A shade of sadness o'er her early days;
For, to that mother's tender love compared,
The show of kindness made by Antoinette
Seemed like the glistening beams of winter's sun,
After the genial glow of summer's ray.
Her heart to Catherine would have fondly turned,
But, ah! the fatal barrier which the name
Of heretic involved, to one whose mind
By Romish bigotry had been imbued,
Seared, like a chilling blight, the sentiment,
Which else had such a source of pleasure proved.
Brother or sister's love she ne'er had known,
And to society had not, as yet,
Been introduced: her father, by his schemes
For gaining this world's wealth, was occupied;
Yet, still he loved her, and when he perceived
Her drooping state, became desirous
That to the enlivening scenes, which tend to chase

Mental depression, she—by Antoinette—
Should, without loss of time, be introduced.
This wish was by that lady seconded,
Hoping it would efface from Thecla's mind
The image of Bellairs: e'en Father Claude,
Though an ascetic, yet, would oft allow
His flock, without remonstrance or rebuke,
To mix in scenes of gay frivolity:
Aware, perchance, the human mind thereby
Is often rendered weak and indolent,
And to reflection's labour disinclined,
And thus, is unresistingly detained
In priestly leading strings: he also thought—
Like Antoinette—that it was probable
Thecla's attractions quickly would obtain,
From one of her own Church, possessed of wealth,
An offer, which her father would approve.
For creeds, they knew, he cared not. Could they see
The maiden to a Catholic husband given,
They deemed her in the Church's fold secured.
Thecla was not averse to see a world
Which, by her youthful friends, had been portrayed
In fairy hues; she hoped its joys would help
To fill the aching void within her heart—
For to that heart religion had not yet
Brought happiness; but, then 'twas in the form
Of slavish fear, and not of trusting love,
As it had been presented to her mind.

At times, her weary soul had yearned to bring
Its sense of guilt and all its secret grief,
In meek confession, to the Saviour's feet:
But Father Claude discouraged the approach,
And hinted that 'twere better to apply
To "Mary," who would kindly overlook
The faults and frailties which our prayers attend,
And plead our cause with her exalted Son—
Who ever listens to His Mother's voice.
It was not long, ere in the giddy maze
Of gay amusements Thecla was immersed,
Whose influence, like an opiate, soothed the sense
Of sadness, but proved no effectual cure.
She was not free from female vanity,
Nor yet, displeased to find herself become
An object of admiring interest;
For, by her beauty and engaging mien,
She charmed, alike, the lively and the grave.
Among the many who confessed the power
Of her attractions, there was one possessed
Of those advantages her father prized,
Joined with the graces pleasing to her sex:
For he was handsome, with a winning tongue,
Well versed in flattery's beguiling arts,
And Thecla, by his homage gratified—
Although she did not love, and almost thought
Her heart to love was inaccessible—
Yet, found a charm in listening to his words.

The friendship which Bellairs had ever shewn
She valued much, in spite of prejudice;
But Willoughby had ne'er allowed his lips
To speak the love within his heart enshrined,
And his attentions bore the character
Of those by brothers, kind, to sisters shewn,—
Not that of homage paid to goddess fair.
And Thecla, with the frothy compliments,
Which Lucian St. Maurice's smiling lips
So gracefully could utter, was as pleased
As school girl with her glittering valentine.
But when her father—who was well aware
St. Maurice, in addition to his wealth,
Might to a title, probably, succeed—
One morning told her, with complacent smile,
The lover his permission had obtained
To plead his ardent suit,—she started back,
Pale as a phantom, and, with deep drawn sigh,
Declared 'twas her intention ne'er to wed,
Nor did she wish to leave him. Brieton knew
That Thecla's truthful, guileless character,
To affectation never had been given,
Yet deemed her of a visionary turn,
And thought she might, perchance, have lately read
Some pious legend, put into her hands
By Father Claude, which, in romantic hues,
Portrayed the merit and the happiness
Of celibacy—by the saints approved.

But, trusting that the fancy would not last,
He thanked her for the love to him expressed,
But added—"She would gratify him more,
"By dutiful compliance with his wish
"To see her fixed in life:" and further urged,
That were she to reject St. Maurice's suit—
Which hitherto, from all he had observed,
She had appeared to favour—some, he feared,
Would think she had been playing the coquette.
He bid her pause, nor rashly to refuse
An offer, he so eligible deemed.
But Thecla pleaded that a time, at least,
Should for consideration be allowed,
But promised—in obedience to his wish—
St. Maurice's visits, meanwhile, to receive,
Though as a friend, and not a lover deemed.
The wily Antoinette in secret smiled,
And Thecla deemed, already, as a fly
In shining web of silvery tissue caught:
And though she had good reason to suppose
St. Maurice's character was far removed
From that on which a maiden may depend
For life-long happiness, it was enough
To win her favour, that he was esteemed
A faithful member of the Catholic Church.
Encouraged by her approbative smiles,
Lucian St. Maurice almost daily paid
His visits; yet, but little progress made

In gaining Thecla's heart, till Antoinette,
Annoyed, and fearing Willoughby Bellairs
Was still remembered with regretful thoughts,
Resolved to take advantage of a tale
By gossips whispered—though devoid of truth—
That Willoughby already was engaged
To a fair lady of the Church Reformed,
Whom he had met with while in Germany,
Where he had lately been. This she detailed
With confidential air, to Thecla's ear,
With many confirmatory incidents,
Which her inventive fancy well supplied.
She saw her tortured victim's countenance
Turn pale and red, by turns: and following up
The advantage gained, pretended to lament
The fate of one—an amiable girl—
Who, self-deceived, by some attentions paid
By Willoughby, had given her heart unasked,
And, now—to disappointment fallen a prey—
Was sinking 'neath consumption's fatal blight:
" 'Twas pitiable, certainly," she said;
" But yet, she thought, no lady who possessed
" A spark of proper maiden dignity,
" Would—when she knew another was preferred—
" Allow herself, one moment, to retain
" Love unreturned, but tear it from her heart,
" Whatever pangs the effort might inflict."
Thecla in maiden pride and self-respect

Had ne'er been wanting, and from that same hour
She made resolve to banish from her heart
The image of Bellairs,—and to this end
To look less coldly on St. Maurice's suit:
While he, to do him justice, played his part
With all an anxious lover's skill and tact;
For with her tastes he ever sympathized,
Echoed her sentiments, and praised her books,
Her harp's sweet music and, still more, her songs—
Though there, at least, his praises were sincere,
For Thecla had a most enchanting voice:
E'en in her favourite flowers St. Maurice took
So great an interest that she soon allowed
Of his companionship in garden walks,
And, while conversing, oft she found herself
Wandering amid a grove of shady trees,
Or by a silver stream that murmured near,
Till she, whose mind was naturally formed
For friendship and affection, by degrees
Began to feel love—or a sentiment
To it akin—steal o'er her conscious heart
For one, who oft affirmed her presence formed
"The sunshine of his life." Now Antoinette,
With secret exultation, soon perceived
The change, which promised with success to crown
Her constant efforts, aided, as they were,
By Father Claude, who, at confession, strove
To represent that filial duty called

For meek submission to her father's wish—
That to St. Maurice she should give her hand
Soon as the stipulated time was past,
He had conceded to prepare her mind.
The sense of filial duty had due weight
In Thecla's heart; nor—yet, the truth to tell,
Although not sordid—did she quite ignore
The advantages her sire had pointed out,
Which love, allied to all that wealth confers
Of earthly good, possesses over that
Enshrined beneath a humble cottage roof,
Though rose and woodbine may its walls adorn.
She, therefore, gradually became prepared
A favourable answer to concede,
When her decision could not be delayed.
St. Maurice, wisely, chose the evening hour
Of spring's bright days, when all was calm and still,
And moonbeams shed a soft romantic light
Beneath her favourite arbour's flowery shade—
To press his ardent suit on Thecla's ear.
And when, in earnest and pathetic tones,
He told her that his earthly happiness
On her decision hung, and that his heart
Would break if she his cherished hopes destroyed.
How could she be so cruel as to give
A cold denial? Little did she know
Those protestations of unchanging love,
By his false lips, had many a time been made

To beauty in the humbler walks of life,
And that full many a simple, trusting maid—
Deluded by the treacherous tale—had sunk
In guilt and shame, in ruin and despair.

It was the policy of Antoinette,
When made aware St. Maurice had obtained
Thecla's consent, ere long, to be his bride,
To leave no leisure for reflection's voice,
Lest it should bring repentance. To this end,
The intermediate time was occupied
With such amusements as might banish thought;
But no grave admonitions were received,
Either from Antoinette or Father Claude,
Touching the onerous duties which attend
The marriage state; perchance, they judged it best
No sober shade of warning should be spread
O'er her horizon, till the solemn vow,
Which could not be recalled, had passed her lips.

CANTO XV.

CREATURE WORSHIP.

"The Lord our God"—a jealous God declares
  Himself to be—who will not on His throne
An idol god permit, with Him, to share
  The sacred homage, due to Him alone.

His name is "Love," to those who seek His face,
  But woe, to such as dare provoke His ire;
For, to the souls that slight His offered grace,
  The Lord our God is a "consuming fire."

"Cursed is he"*—so saith the Sacred Word—
Whose faithless heart, departing from the Lord,
Makes man his trust, whose hopes and fears are given
To creatures of a day, and not to Heaven.

* Jeremiah xvii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

He shall be like the heath in desert plain,
On whose parched ground descends no genial rain:
Time, change, and death his earthly joys will blight,
And leave him desolate in sorrow's night.

But, blessed is the man whose soul confides
In Israel's God, and in His love abides;
For he shall be like some fair tree that grows
On verdant bank, where peaceful river flows.

He need not fear when evil days draw nigh,
Death shall translate him to the realms on high,
Where souls beatified immortal shine,
Beneath the radiant beams of love divine.

Great was the joy of Madame St. Anaud
When the seclusion—which to her had seemed
An age of weariness—had reached its close,
And visitors, once more, the salon graced.
The heart of Genevieve, in secret, yearned
To see once more the still loved Irvindale,
Who had, she hoped, their separation mourned.
But, to her mingled wonder and chagrin,
He was among their latest visitors:

And e'en when he appeared, his manner wore
A somewhat cold, though deferential air;
But this she, naturally, attributed
To lingering pique. But when she found her smiles
And gracious looks no alteration wrought,
Displeasure kindled in her haughty breast,
Imparting to her beauteous eyes a look
Of withering disdain, which Irvindale
Chose to suppose intended to convey
An intimation that she wished, henceforth,
They should regard each other but as friends.
But Genevieve—alas! for her—retained
The fond regard he once had sought to gain,
By every art which passion could suggest.
"And can his love"—the unhappy lady thought—
"So soon have vanished?—No! it cannot be:
"He will return and my forgiveness seek
"For this display of cold indifference,
"Which proud resentment of my hasty lines,
"Most probably, called forth." But this fond hope
Soon vanished, for he neither came nor wrote:
And in her swelling heart, at length, there rose
Suspicion, that while she in solitude
Herself had buried, he, amid the gay
Resorts of pleasure, or of social life,
Had met with some fair novelty, whose charms
Now filled that place within his fickle heart
Her image had so lately occupied.

Nor was it long ere Madame St. Anaud
Heard, that, while many his attentions shared,
One, in especial, had appeared to fix
His admiration, and—we scarce need say—
This fair one's name was torture to the ear
Of Genevieve, whose friend failed not to learn
That Adeliza, who had lately come
Upon a visit to Countess Du Bois,
Was she, to whom the faithless Irvindale
His fond devoirs now paid. The bitter pangs
Of jealousy once more absorbed the heart
Of Genevieve, as she recalled to mind
The sister who had, e'en in childhood, been
The rival that had marred her happiness.
Meanwhile, the visits paid by Irvindale
To Count Du Bois' fair family, increased
In frequency, and every day his soul
Of Adeliza more enamoured grew.
Unhappily,—like many of his school—
He, as already told, a pleasure took
In trying to subvert the faith of those—
Whether belonging to the Romish Church
Or to the Church Reformed—who still adhered
To Christianity: and often tried
This fatal predilection to exert
On Adeliza's mind. At first, her soul,
With feelings near akin to horror, shrank
From his attempts to undermine her faith

In what she had been taught, from infancy,
To reverence and believe: though, on what grounds,
She ne'er had been instructed,—therefore, fell
Into the snare thus laid for her, by one
Who, sad to say, already had become
The object of her heart's idolatry;
Whose love she was more anxious to obtain,
And whose displeasure she more deeply feared,
Than His, on whom the soul's eternal weal,
For time and for eternity, depends.
And, finding that a cloud began to lour
Upon his brow, if she his views opposed,
She feigned conviction, e'en before 'twas felt,
Till—retribution, just!—the darkness sought
Fell on her, and she readily imbibed
His sentiments, and closed her heart to all
Upbraiding conscience vainly strove to urge,
Until its stifled voice in silence slept.
She ceased to pray; for Irvindale affirmed
That a prayer-hearing, and rewarding God—
Himself the giver of a heart to pray—
Was but enthusiasm's feverish dream.
But—prayer ignored—what stands between the soul
And utter alienation from its God?
Her cousins, by the present world absorbed,
And with their father's sceptic views imbued,
Were more disposed to aid, than to retard
Her downward course, and e'en rejoiced to see

Her mind set free from what they chose to call
The trammels of enslaving prejudice.
But as the time drew near which had been fixed
For her returning home, misgiving fears
Stole o'er her mind, for Irvindale, as yet,
No declaration of his love had made,
And she was doomed to feel, in spite of pride,
The pangs of a suspense, which cannot ask
The question which those pangs might terminate.
But Irvindale felt of her love secure;
And,—whether that a feeling of remorse,
E'en in his selfish bosom lingered still,
For his inconstancy to Genevieve,
Or whatsoe'er the cause,—he had delayed
His passion to avow. He was aware,
That thorns amid love's roses soon would spring,
When that avowal reached her mother's ear,
Who was, he knew, a zealous Catholic,
And would be greatly scandalized to find
That Adeliza had her heart bestowed
On one her Church esteemed a reprobate.
He felt assured that she would not allow
His visits, and, he feared, would interdict
His correspondence with her daughter fair,
And, perhaps, call in—though that, he hoped, were vain—
The power of priestly terrors to her aid.
But, 'twas his consolation to reflect

That her authority would cease ere long,
Since, by her father's will, in one year more
His daughter of her fortune and herself
Would be the mistress. Therefore, when, at length,
A letter came the daughter to remind
The time when she had promised to return
To her expecting mother, was arrived,
The lover took meet opportunity
To draw from her a promise to be his,
Soon as the tedious months had past away
When she her independence could assert.
He further urged, that they should soothe the pain
Of absence by a correspondence, held
In secret, through the medium of her friends,
Which, by a trifling sacrifice of truth,
Might from her mother's knowledge be concealed.
Now, Adeliza, some few months ago,
With pain, if not displeasure, would have shrunk
From a proposal which, she saw, involved
Not only falsehood, but ingratitude
Towards one who had been ever kind to her;
But the new code of morals she had learned
From Irvindale's theology, had quenched
The reverence once for Scripture's precepts felt,
And conscience, ossified, faint protest made
'Gainst truth and filial duty's sacrifice.
Countess Du Bois was made their confidant,
Who promised that her daughters and herself

Would kindly act as mediums, and convey
His letters in their own, while hers might be
To them addressed, though with a secret mark.
To wean the fair betrothed from mournful thoughts
Her sprightly cousins every effort used:
Their minds, just then, were greatly occupied
By the gay vision of a masked ball,
Which, to their joy, was likely to take place
Ere Adeliza quitted their abode,
And she their fond anticipations shared,
For Irvindale was an invited guest:
And in their preparations for the scene
The youthful party other cares forgot.

CANTO XVI.

TAKING UP THE CROSS.

O! be true to the Cross, in the Saviour confiding,
  Who died to redeem us from sin and its doom.
Let the Cross be our glory, on earth while abiding,
  Our hope and our plea when we sink in the tomb.

O! cling to the Cross, when stern trials alarm thee,
  And floods of temptation tempestuously roll,
No trial or loss can eventually harm thee,
  Save the loss of thy Saviour and loss of thy soul.

Then be true to the Cross, nor e'er shrink from defending
  Its cause, though the proud unbeliever deride:
But remember the day when Messiah descending,
  The traitors shall judge who His name have denied.

ALONE.

Who are as heroes and as heroines deemed
By Heaven,—howe'er by this world dis-esteemed?
'Tis they who fear their God, but none beside,
Nor care, although the thoughtless world deride:
The tide of human censure or applause
May flow where'er it will, the sacred cause
Of truth and virtue they will ever own,
Nor e'er desert, though they should stand alone.

Who are the wise, in Heaven's approving eye?
They who remember each, alone, must die,—
Alone, must meet the power men justly call
"The King of Terrors,"—fatal foe to all;
Who seek not victory through the Saviour's death:
For ah! when faints the heart and fails the breath,
And pillowed couch supports the sinking head,
Though weeping friends surround our dying bed,
Yet must the parting soul go forth alone,
And answer for itself before the Eternal Throne.

The dreary blank by Thecla's absence left,
Was deeply felt by Catherine and Bellairs;
But Catherine had scarcely dared to hope
Their anxious efforts would successful prove.
Bellairs had been more sanguine; therefore, felt
The disappointment keenly, when he saw
His pleasing vision vanish like a dream.
He felt assured her father would have raised
No obstacle, had Thecla and himself
From cousins become lovers, since he knew
Bellairs was well connected, and had wealth.
But ah! while Thecla held her present views—
Much as he loved her—Willoughby could see
The complicated ills which ever wait
On such alliances. Full well he knew
That by the Church of Rome she was enjoined
To look on heretics—however near,
Or dear, by other ties—as beings held
Accursed by heaven: therefore, as enemies
To be accounted. "Could I bear," he thought,
"To know the love she bore me, was by her
"Accounted sinful? more than that, to know
"That priestly ears were made her confidants,
"Perchance of some unscrupulous hypocrite,
"Who might, if married, from her husband strive
"Her heart to alienate, and 'twixt us sow

"Dissension's deadly seeds; yet, should I make
"Objection to his hateful visits paid,
"I should be charged with tyranny profane,
"And interference made with conscience's rights.
"No! let me rather bear love's secret pangs,
"Than plunge myself and her into a maze,
"Where that which each esteemed as duty's path
"Would prove both dangerous and bewildering."
But, here his thoughts an interruption met
From Catherine, who held within her hand
The sacred volume she had lately given
To Thecla, who had left it in a drawer
In her boudoir, and in its leaves were found
A slip of paper, stating her regret
To be compelled the present to return,
Which she had valued; but, that Father Claude
Had made it a condition, ere he gave
The absolution needful to her peace.
Bellairs was much concerned at this last proof
Of the blind, helpless, hopeless vassalage
In which the Romish priesthood hold their dupes—
Who must not, dare not, struggle to be free,
Lest they their souls imperil.

Father Claude
Failed not to enforce the promise he had wrung
From his reluctant victim, not to hold
A correspondence with her relatives,—

And little intercourse, from henceforth, passed
Between the families: for Willoughby,
Who, towards a knowledge of the healing art
His studies had directed, could not spend
Much time at home. But, ere the genial reign
Of summer had to winter given place,
A rumour reached the ear of Catherine,
Which told that Thecla—lately introduced
To gay amusements and society—
Was wooed by one her father well approved,
And was expected soon to be his bride:
Nor was it long ere confirmation came,
In a few lines from Brieton received.
The intended bridegroom's family and wealth
Were in these lines set forth: 'twas also said
He was a Catholic; but not one word
Descriptive of his character was given,
From which to judge the chance of happiness
Which Thecla's future prospects might present.
Catherine—to whom the letter was addressed—
Was deeply grieved: for ah! she rightly guessed
The bitter anguish Willoughby would feel.
'Tis true, he oft had tried to school his mind
To bear the stroke, as what he must expect:
But certainty's stern aspect brings a pang
Anticipation cannot realize.
And now, alas! but little hope remained
That she would superstition's bondage break,

When by a husband's influence riveted.
"Ah! dearest Thecla," to himself he said,
"Thou now art lost—for ever lost to me:
"Yet, I will love thee as a sister dear,
"And for thy welfare pray, while life remains."
'Tis said that earthly joys, though innocent,
Oft prove a snare, by drawing off the mind
From things unseen: nor is affliction's day,
From influence injurious always free,—
And he was sometimes tempted by the world
In pleasure's vortex for awhile to plunge,
To deaden sorrow's heart-consuming power;
But, by religion's aid, he wisely shunned
Unhallowed solace from this source to seek,
Though deeming it expedient to essay,
By change of scene, to chase depression's gloom:
And Catherine was, for his sake, content
Awhile to lose his loved society.
He tarried for awhile at Gottingen,
Where he had many friends residing still,
And at whose far-famed University
His studies, for some time, had been pursued.
While there, the pleasing labours of the pen
A daily portion of his time employed:
And, with a hope it might, perchance, be made
To serve the cause of evangelic truth,
He joined a band of youthful candidates,
Who—lured by hopes of literary fame,

Or other motives—had become engaged
Writing an essay on some given theme
Of metaphysical philosophy,
To which a prize—by many coveted,
Though of no great pecuniary worth—
Was, to the most approved candidate,
To be awarded by a chosen band
Of literary lights, the greater part
Connected with the University.
Bellairs did not expect to gain the prize,
Though they who knew him thought it probable.
But he was well aware that of the band,
Before alluded to, the larger half
Held rationalistic views,—nor were exempt
From prejudice 'gainst that which, in their eyes,
Enthusiastic bigotry was deemed.
But Willoughby cared little for the charge;
And hoping that on sacred truth's behalf
He might, perchance, some little good effect,
Entered the list. But, ere the day arrived,
A well-known friend—no candidate himself,
But one who of the literary world,
At least that part of it wherein his lot
Had long been cast, knew much—called on Bellairs,
Who to him shewed his essay, which the friend
Much praised, with warmth sincere. "But," added he
"Though I admire it, yet, I should not act
"A faithful part did I not frankly own

"That, notwithstanding all the depth of thought
"And genius which I deem it to evince,
"I fear it will not suit the present age;
"For merit and success are oft divorced
"In this strange world, and—though to be deplored—
"It is an age when scepticism abounds,
"And infidelity is often found
"Where we had not expected, and encased
"In prejudice and bigotry as strong,
"Though of a somewhat different character,
"As that which they so frequently ascribe
"To their opponents. And I can but fear,
"From what I know of many who compose
"The band, on whose decision must depend
"Success or failure, that your chance is small,
"Unless you somewhat modify the tone
"Your essay which pervades, and parts omit;
"For 'tis in vain to swim against the tide.
"Could you but be persuaded to forego
"The introduction of your favourite views,
"My hopes would equal to my wishes be
"That yours may be the laurels." With a sigh
Bellairs replied—"I own, it would belie
"My conscience to omit the parts you name."
"Well," said his friend, "if you will not expunge,
"You might, at least, their meaning soften down.
"Some have the happy art to veil their thoughts
"In language gracefully ambiguous:

"They skim o'er controversy's troubled waves
"With ærial wing, nor 'neath the surface dive;
"And thus escape the monsters of the deep.
"By using dubious phraseology,
"We oft may through the adversaries' camp
"Pass scathless." "But, my friend," Bellairs rejoined
"Such subterfuges do but ill beseem
"The soldiers of the Cross, whose Lord requires
"They should not be ashamed to own His cause,
"But faithfully confess Him before men,
"Lest He disown them at the last great Day."
He paused: and Egerton—who saw 'twere vain
To press him further—left soon afterwards,
Though with a feeling of increased esteem;
For he was one of those whose candid mind
With just appreciation can admire
The heroism which yet they practise not;
And, though regretful, yet his heart approved
The firm resolve which thus, to principle,
Could nobly sacrifice the love of fame.
Bellairs, when left to meditate alone,
Felt—as excitement's fervour died away—
A painful struggle rising in his breast;
For e'en the wise—though knowing fame to be
A glittering bubble—cannot always shut
Their hearts against the splendour of its hues:
The more so as it with it, doubtless, brings
An influence which, if turned to good account,

May serve the cause of truth and piety.
But vain regrets were changed to self-reproach,
As to himself he said—" Shall I repine
" At these light trials, and forget the days
" When those who followed Christ, in many a land,
" With holy fortitude endured the rack
" And faced the flames (if called on) for His sake?
" And wherefore should I care for ridicule?
" The world may call me weak enthusiast,
" Or—like the King of Moab to Balaam—say,
" ' I would have raised thee high, but, lo! thy God
" ' Hath kept thee back from honour!' What, to me,
" Were all that earth could offer without Him—
" The Saviour-God—whose love through life has been
" Its sweetest solace, and, I trust, will be
" In death's last hour, and through eternity."
'Twas not long after, he with calmness heard
Another had obtained what all his friends
Agreed in thinking might have been his own.
But in his soul he felt that holy peace
The world can neither give nor take away,—
The peace which conscience, and the cheering hope
Of heaven's approval, to the heart can bring.
He had some thoughts of visiting the land
Which had the birthplace of his parents been;
But, ere he went, he spent a few short days
With that dear mother, who, he knew, would feel
His absence much, although she ne'er complained:

And for her sake he did his best to wear
A cheerful aspect, though his heart was wrung
To hear the day had been already fixed
For Thecla to become St. Maurice's bride.
And yet, 'twas not the only circumstance
That banished slumber from his weary eyes
The night of his return: for it had chanced
That passing, at the twilight's solemn hour,
The Haunted House, he saw a figure stand
Within the gate, in mantle closely wrapped,
And heard a voice, in tones sepulchral, say—
"Stranger, I know thy troubled soul is vexed
"For one beloved in vain; but greater still
"Would be thy anguish didst thou know what I
"Could tell thee!—Dost thou start, and marvel how
"I thus can pierce the secrets of thy breast?
"Then know, that she the world supposes blest
"With prospects fair of earthly happiness,
"Is—all unconsciously—about to plight
"Her life-long vows to a deceiver base.
"If from that doom of hopeless wretchedness
"Thou wouldst her rescue, I can that reveal
"Which in thy power will place it. None will see
"Thy entrance here, or of thy visit know."
Bellairs, transfixed, had listened to her words,
And felt the strong impulsive wish arise
Her cave to enter; but the faithful voice
Of conscience whispered—"Holy Scripture's page

"Forbids us to resort to those who deal,
"Or e'en profess to deal, in magic arts,
"Or hold communion with the Evil One."
He turned away: but to his mind there came
This solemn thought,—"And shall I, then, in scorn
"This wretched creature leave, without a word
"Which might to sense of guilt awaken her?"
He therefore paused, and said: "Didst thou possess
"The power thou claimest, I should feel it wrong,
"By means I deem unlawful, to obtain
"The knowledge—else desired. But, ere we part,
"Unhappy woman, hear my warning voice:
"Forsake thy wicked calling, and essay
"To earn thy bread by some less sinful means.
"Better to starve than serve the Evil One,
"Whose service—by thy countenance to judge—
"Thou hast already found is bondage sore:
"Then, think what it must be at death's dread hour,
"To fall beneath his power, and share his doom,
"In the dark regions of eternal woe."
A look of ghastly anguish and despair
Passed o'er her countenance as thus he spake.
But she replied: "'Tis vain to preach to me,
"For whom no hope remains. In evil hour
"I sold myself to Satan." "Speak not thus,"
He answered; "for thy soul was not thine own
"To sell, and Christ, our Saviour, has the power
"To nullify the bargain, and bestow

"Pardon and peace through His atoning blood.
"O! fly to Him, before it be too late."
Ere he could utter more, he saw a form
Approaching, and—remembering we are told
Of evil e'en the appearance to avoid,
And well aware it, probably, would lead
To misconstruction, were he to be seen
Engaged in converse with the Sorceress—
He left her, and pursued his homeward way.

CANTO XVII.

THE PAINFUL DISCOVERY.

He met her—in her hours of joy,
  Her eyes with gladness bright;
He loved her—as a pleasing toy
  That glittered in his sight.

And she—with beauty's pride elate—
  Too ready to believe
The flattering tale, found all too late—
  Man flatters to deceive.

He met her—in her hour of woe,
  Her wasted cheek was pale;
He saw the tears of sorrow flow,
  Beneath her silken veil.

But turning from the faded flower,
  With heart unmoved, and cold,
Forgot the vows in passion's hour
  His faithless lips had told.

Spite of himself, Zatahra's startling words—
So unexpected—greatly discomposed
The mind of Willoughby. How should he act?
For to communicate intelligence
Derived from such a source, and couched in terms
So vague, and void of proof, he feared would serve
No end, except upon himself to bring
Suspicion; but to Catherine, who had been
His confidant from childhood, he resolved,
Without delay, the incident to tell.
It chanced, while wandering on the ensuing eve,
He reached a spot where stood a glassy pool,
Shaded with trees, which o'er its surface threw
A mournful gloom; the aspect of the place
Suited the current of his troubled thoughts.
Pausing awhile, he saw a female form
Gliding among the trees, with look forlorn.
"Surely," he thought, "'tis not some hapless one,
"With frantic thoughts on self-destruction bent,
"Perchance, unconscious of my presence here!"
But scarce had the suspicion crossed his mind
E'er on his ear there fell the startling sound
Of splashing water, and his eye perceived
The agitated surface of the pool
In circles widely spread, move round and round;

He rushed towards the spot, though well he knew
The attempt was perilous: but he could trust
His Saviour with his soul; so, plunging in,
He struggled hard the already senseless form
To rescue; and, at length, upon the bank
His burden, and himself, in safety found.
He knew there was a cottage nigh at hand,
To which he hastened; help was soon obtained;
Nor was it long e'er life became restored
To the sad victim of her own rash act.
Catherine, apprized, soon hastened to the scene,
And gazed with pity on the wasted form,
Where want and woe had set their mournful seal!
Soon as the bloodless lips could speak, they told
That she (an orphan left) had earned her bread
By needlework, but, failing of employ,
To destitution had become reduced;
And by the cruel woman where she lodged—
Though from the bed of sickness scarcely risen—
Was driven, unsheltered, on the ruthless world:
And in despair had self-destruction sought.
Whether this statement truthful was, or false,
There was, as yet, no means to ascertain;
But Catherine—with the kindly charity
That "hopeth all things"—took the outcast home,
And tended her, with kind maternal care.
Bellairs, a few days after this event,
For England sailed; but ere he left his home,

His meeting with Demonia and her words
Confided to his mother, on whose mind
They deeply sank—scarce knowing (like himself)
What course to take. Meanwhile, she did not fail
To strive, with Christian faithfulness and love,
To lead the rescued sufferer to a sense
Of the dread guilt that suicide involves;
And shew how mad, how foolish, is the act
Of those whose minds, rebellious to the will
Of Him, whose wrath our sins have well deserved,
Have rushed from present ills, on endless woe;
When, had they sought His aid, who kindly bids
Our guilty souls bowed down with sorrow's load,
To come to Him, in prayer, and humble faith,
They would have found deliverance from their griefs,
If not on earth, at least—at death—in Heaven.
It was with heartfelt joy that Catherine saw
Her prayerful efforts were not made in vain;
And though, at first, Lucetta's deep remorse
Seemed bordering on despair, yet faith and hope
Soon struggled through the gloom, and brought the peace
Which springs from trust in Christ our Sacrifice.
One day, when Catherine sat beside her couch
(For her exhausted state had fever brought,
Though now recovering), she, to Catherine, told
Her mournful tale, with truthful artlessness:—
"I was," she said, "a widow's only child,

"And (placed with a modiste) my living earned
"By needlework; but, as my mother lived
"Some miles from Brussels, in a cottage lone,
"I hired a humble lodging, where I slept.
"I oft was at the counter called to serve;
"And ah! one luckless day, a stranger came,
"In gentleman's attire, who lingered long
"Conversing with me, and my foolish heart
"Was much delighted with his flattering words.
"He oft returned, nor was it very long
"Ere to my lodgings he a visit paid;
"And, after that, when working hours were o'er,
"He often walked with me at eventide,
"When he would talk of love, to one, whose mind—
"By novel reading rendered weak and vain—
"Gave credence to his heartless promises
"Of marriage, never meant to be fulfilled.
"He wrought my ruin. I had hitherto
"Contrived, from my dear mother, to conceal
"The acquaintanceship, and she was spared the grief
"Which my misconduct would have brought to her;
"For, seized with sudden illness, she expired
"In a few hours, and I was left alone,
"O'erwhelmed with grief, for I had loved her well.
"I lost the sprightly graces which had charmed
"My false seducer, and, about that time,
"It chanced there came to the establishment
"In which I worked a blooming country girl,

"Whose beauty pleased his fancy, and his heart—
"Won by the fair Clotilde—to me grew cold.
"My heart was broken; but my cup of woe
"Was not yet full. I had an enemy,
"Who watched my conduct with a jealous eye,
"And, with exaggerations (well supplied
"By her own malice), my imprudence told
"To my employer. I became dismissed,
"And, though I diligently sought for work
"In other quarters, I could none obtain.
"The little I had saved was quickly spent,
"And destitution's fearful form drew nigh.
"But, while I had a home to shelter me,
"I bore the pangs of hunger; but, at length,
"Sickness ensued, and, soon as I had left
"My wretched couch, the woman where I lodged,
"Finding that I was penniless, became
"Impatient, and irate, and from her door—
"With cruel taunts and threatening language—drove
"My trembling form. I knew not where to go.
"And ah! Religion ne'er had found a place
"Within my heart; so, frantic with despair,
"I sought the pool—resolved my wretched life
"To end—nor thought upon eternity.
"Great was my sin! But O! how wonderful
"The mercy which preserved my soul from death."
Sobs choked her voice; and Catherine's kindly heart
Was, by the sad recital, greatly moved—

But, when Lucetta calmness had regained—
Her base betrayer's name desired to know,
And could her deep emotion scarce suppress,
When on her ear there fell the well-known name
Of Lucian St. Maurice. Could it be?
Was Thecla to a villain, then, betrothed?
But, striving to suppress the indignant grief
That swelled her bosom, she essayed to soothe
The hapless victim of his cruel arts,
Assuring her she should no more be cast,
A friendless outcast, on the unfeeling world,
While Catherine had a home to shelter her.
But, when alone, the gentle lady sat
Long time in painful meditation lost,
Thinking what course were wisest to pursue
To rescue Thecla from what, much she feared,
Would prove a fate of life-long misery.

CANTO XVIII.

THE MASKED BALL.

EASTER.

Angels—Holy Scriptures tell us—
  Love Redemption's Work to scan,
Trace the ruin that befel us,
  And the grace that rescued man.

They, from realms of bliss descended,
  Heralding the Saviour's birth,
And his ministry attended,
  While he sojourned on the earth.

On the hallowed spot appearing,
  Where His lifeless form had lain,
They—a human semblance wearing—
  Robed in dazzling white proclaim—

"He is risen! wherefore weep ye?
"See your Lord's forsaken bed;
"For the living, wherefore seek ye
In the dwellings of the dead?"

"He is risen!"—O! what transport
That consoling thought conveys,
To each other's hearts, the passport,
Of the saints, in ancient days.

Though in death they now are sleeping,
And the tyrant o'er his prey
Still a jealous watch is keeping,
Soon will come the awful day,

When their Lord o'er death victorious,
All who sought him here will own,
Raised in forms of beauty glorious,
They shall stand before His throne.

Why should hearts, these truths believing,
Be by earth's delusions snared?
What is worth our joy or grieving,
With eternal things compared?

Let us from the World receding,
Rise to Him above the sky,
Who for man is ever pleading
At His Father's Throne on high.

'Twas Easter week, when pious minds delight
To muse upon that triumph over death,
Their Lord obtained—when from the grave he rose,
And Heaven's eternal gates, which sin had closed,
Threw open to believers in His Name.
But no such meditations found a place
Within the godless minds of those with whom
The misled Adeliza now sojourned:
Their present thoughts were fully occupied
With preparations for the masked ball—
Before alluded to. It was agreed
By its projectors, that the only mask
Should be a fold of crape of sable hue,
Which (passed across the face) in part concealed
The features, yet sufficient left revealed
For love or friendship's penetrating glance.
In this assembly, Antoinette appeared,
And Thecla, with St. Maurice by her side,
Whispering soft flattery in her listening ear;
But while her blushing cheek with pleasure glowed,
How little the deluded maiden thought
That 'twas not with an undivided heart
He loved her; and that, on the ensuing morn,
He was engaged to meet a young grisette,
Whose ruin he was plotting. Yet (how strange!)

The base deceiver, but a few days since,
Had, to his spiritual director, made
Confession, and his absolution gained
With some slight penance, easily observed.
Then, with a conscience seared, not pacified,
Again pursued guilt's dark and downward path.—
" Keep thine own secrets dark confessional!
" 'Tis well thou shouldst, if e'en the half be true,
" Of what is said of thee; for every crime,
" And every evil passion of the heart,
" In thy dread privacy an utterance finds.
" Chamber of imagery! which, like those
" Before the prophet's startled eye disclosed,
" Deeper and deeper shades of guilt reveal
" To those who pry into thy mysteries."—
But, to return. The friends of Thecla knew,
Or might have known, St. Maurice did not rule
His life by virtue's laws; yet, sad to say,
Her mother took no pains to ascertain
His character, except that he professed
The Catholic Faith, and to its rites conformed,
While, 'neath the specious plea of charity,
She closed her ears not only to report,
But e'en to well meant hints, by friendship breathed.
And, thus, the hapless Thecla still remained
In ignorance of what so much concerned
Her earthly hopes, and life-long happiness.
Although the fold of crape, before described,

Was worn by most, yet other forms appeared
In mask opaque, while robes of flowing make
Completed the concealment coveted.
Of these was one who came with heavy heart:
'Twas Genevieve De Tracy, who, impelled
By restless jealousy, that sought to end
The tortures of suspense, the occasion seized,
To ascertain if rumour's tale were true—
As brought to her by Madame St. Anaud—
Who now, attired in similar costume,
Attended her; the pair in silence moved,
And held no intercourse with those around.
The watchful eyes of Genevieve were fixed
On Irvindale, and Adeliza's form—
And soon perceived what to her swelling heart
Brought full conviction of their mutual love.
She left the scene, e'er midnight's hour was struck;
And with excitement's feverish restlessness,
Demonia's dwelling sought, where still there shone
A glimmering light; her friend remained alone
Within the waiting-room, while she appeared
Before the Sorceress,—but strove in vain
Her agitation to suppress or hide,
As she exclaimed: "If thou hast ever felt
"The pangs of jealousy, grant me revenge
"On one whom once I loved." Zatahra ground
Her teeth, and said: "I know revenge is sweet;"
"But yet—methinks thou dost not wish his death?

"No," was the answer, "but I wish some grief
"May on him fall, and vex his soul with pangs,
"Bitter as those which he has caused to me."
"Thou shalt have thy desire," the Sorceress said.
"When yon now waning moon, shall reappear
"In full orbed splendour robed, return again;
"Till then, with patience wait, for e'en revenge
"Must bide its time." The Countess then withdrew.
Meanwhile, the scene she had so lately left
Was gay as ever; but some circumstance
Had, for a little while, St. Maurice called
From Thecla, who, to pass away the time,
Amused herself with gazing on the groups
That flitted by, or stood, in converse held,
Till her attention became riveted
Upon two ladies, youthful as herself,
In simple and yet picturesque costume,
As village maidens dressed: one on her arm
Bore a small basket, filled with posies, formed
Of field flowers—fair, arranged as if for sale.
The other played a minstrel's part, and sung
To her guitar, which, touched with tasteful skill,
And by a pleasing voice accompanied,
Had twice delighted many a listening ear.
Thecla—whose entrance had been somewhat late—
Had not been present when the maiden sung
A legendary strain, whose words were these:

SONG.

The heir of lands and mansions fair,
  Had left the revels gay,
And at an oriel window stood,
  To watch the close of day.

When lo! 'mid twilight's gloom he saw
  A shadowy form appear:
And from the Banshee's wailing voice
  These strains fell on his ear:

"O! child of Adam's mortal race,
  "My warning voice attend:
"Thy life's frail sands have run apace,
  "And soon will reach their end.

"Perchance thy heart hath long ere this,
  "In hope's enchanted bower,
"With visions bright, of earthly bliss,
  "Beguiled the passing hour.

"But mark yon fair refulgent sky,
  "How bright with sunset's glow;
"Yet a dark cloud is louring nigh,
  "And soon the storm will blow!

"My prescient eye discerns a room,
"Where weeping mourners wait;
"I see a hearse with sable plume,
"Before thy castle gate.

"Thy loved one, from her window lone,
"The mournful train will see,
"And wring her hands with many a groan,
"For ah!—it comes for thee.

"I see a tomb of marble fair,
"Thy aged sire will raise;
"Ambition's dream must perish there,
"And wreaths of human praise.

"The shadows fall—I must not wait;
"Child of the earth,—farewell!
"Prepare to meet the early fate
"My warning-strains foretell."

Her last effusion seemed on Thecla's heart
To strike a painful chord; she scarce knew why;
For 'twas a simple ditty, and contained
Naught but the counsel sage, so often given
To youthful maidens, though it often falls
On disregardful ears; and thus it ran:

SONG.

List my warning, ladies fair,
  Ere you give your heart:
Guard the treasure with all care,
  Nor from it lightly part.
With the festive bridal day,
Lover's vows oft pass away;
Only from the good and kind,
Faithful love expect to find.

List my warning, ladies fair,
  E'er you give your hand:
Yield not to ambition's snare,
  Nor love of house and land.
They, by sordid wishes led,
Who for gold or grandeur wed,
O'er a life of joyless state
Often mourn, when all too late.

The pair were now adjusting their bouquets;
And, as her mother, with a female friend,
In earnest converse seemed to be engaged,
Thecla adventured in an ante-room
(Adorned with many tasteful works of art)
To stray, and, while admiring a vase
Of beauty rare, upon her ear there fell
A gentle voice, and, turning, she beheld
The flower girl stand, who offered a bouquet,
Which Thecla took with graceful courtesy,
And, as she did so, saw, to her surprise,
A little note was placed within its leaves.
"No questions ask, fair lady, 'tis from one—
"Thy own dear mother's friend," the flower girl said,
"Conceal it now, nor read it, till alone."
Just then she saw her mother drawing nigh,
And scarce had time within her vest to hide
The little messenger. The giver's form
Had vanished through a door which seemed to lead
Into a darkened room, and Thecla saw
The maid no more, and ne'er could ascertain
Who she might be, still less who wrote the lines
Of which she was the bearer.

When they reached
The home she quitted, bright with hope and joy,

Thecla, fatigued, and with an anxious heart,
Her chamber sought, and soon dismissed her maid.
Then, with a beating heart (for o'er her soul
A sad presentiment of evil came),
She broke the seal, and read these startling words:
" If thou a life-long wretchedness would'st shun,
" Trust not the fond professions of regard
" Breathed by St. Maurice's false and faithless lips;
" For know, that, when to-morrow's sun shall beam
" Once more upon the earth, he is engaged
" To meet a beauteous girl of lowly birth,
" One of the many he has basely sought
" To lure from virtue's path. It is the day
" When thou wert wont to thy dear mother's grave
" To pay a lonely visit. When the bell
" Tolls five, that visit make, and take thy stand
" Within the chapel. From the window, watch
" The path that lies beside that sacred spot,
" And, 'tis too probable, that thou wilt see
" Sad confirmation of the painful truth
" These faithful lines disclose, which, if despised,
" It may repentance bring, when all too late."

CANTO XIX.

THE CEMETERY.

THE MOURNING CONQUEROR.*

When Gaul's ambitious tyrant led
  His fierce aggressive bands,
And fiend-like war its terrors spread
  O'er Europe's conquered lands:

Each heart was filled with some dismay,
  That peace or country loved;
E'en royal minds could not survey
  His bold career, unmoved.

Now Prussia's king was true, and brave—
  But ah! 'twas Heaven's decree,
That might o'er right awhile should wave
  The flag of victory.

* An incident related in Memoirs of the Queen of Prussia—mother of the present Emperor of Germany.

His queen,—for every virtue famed,
  Nor less for beauty's charms,—
For his dear sake, with courage aimed
  Her gentle breast to arm.

But ah! when fell the dreaded storm,
  She sank beneath its power—
Like blighted rose, whose fragile form
  Lies crushed by ruthless shower.

Indignant Europe—roused at length—
  In solemn league combined;
The proud oppressor owned their strength,
  In prison isle confined.

And Prussia's king, in triumph's hour,
  A branch of laurel bore:
But not to pleasure's festive bower,
  But her—who was no more!

Her beauteous form—in marble wrought—
  As if in slumber, lay:
That sacred spot, he oft had sought,
  Since sad bereavement's day.

And now, he stood, in mournful gloom,
  With head uncovered, there:
And laid the laurel on her tomb,
  Though she no more might share

His joys and griefs, nor sympathize
  In ought that now befel;
For she had passed beyond the skies,
  To realms where angels dwell!

Blest realms of peace, O! when shall earth
  Resemblance bear to thee!
And those millennial days have birth,
  It long hath groaned to see?

INFANT GRAVES.

Some sleep 'neath richly sculptured tomb,
  Some where the green grass waves;
But faith, and hope, have banished gloom
  From every infant grave.

O! happy they—a ransomed race—
  The Saviour early owns,
And changes to a song of praise,
  Their helpless tears and moans.

His cross was fresh upon your brow;
  And ye were pledged to fight
'Gainst wicked world, and snaring flesh,
  And Satan's fearful might!

But ere ye entered on the strife,
  He called you from the field;
Ye wear the victor's crown of life—
  Yet, ne'er the sword did wield.

But did ye bear to realms above
  No touch of earth below?
Does nought of human sympathy
  In heavenly bosoms glow?

Do saints departed, pitying view
  Us toiling pilgrims, here;
And when we sigh, and think of you,
  Say, are you hovering near?

But wherefore should we vainly yearn
  To lift the awful screen,
Which Heaven's All-wise decrees have drawn
  Before the world unseen?

Enough—to know the angels' King,
  In solitude, is near,
To hear the prayers His suppliants bring,
  And dry the mourner's tear.

O, disappointment! round thy cruel throne
A dreary plain interminable lies,—
Where graves of buried hopes, which thou hast slain,
Lie thickly strewn, o'er which, with bitter sighs,
Regret and pale Despair their vigil keep.
How happy they, whose hopes are placed above!
The hapless Thecla, though just entering life,
Had oft been doomed to drink the painful cup
Of disappointment. She the note perused;
Then, pale and motionless, stood lost in thought,
Conjecturing who that warning might have sent.
Perchance, howe'er sincere,—was her first thought,—
The writer was deceived; yet she resolved
Not to despise it: therefore, when the bell
Had told the appointed hour, she wandered forth,
Attended by her maid, and closely veiled.
It was an ancient, solitary spot—
Deserted for more recent burial grounds.
A small dilapidated chapel, clothed
With ivy, still was standing, though but few
The funeral services now read therein;
Nor did its precincts bloom with those gay flowers
Which often deck the dwellings of the dead—
Adornments pleasing, when the gentle calm
Time mostly brings to grief, pervades the soul;
But sometimes grating to the bleeding heart,

Of recent sorrow. Thecla, who of flowers
Was passionately fond, to deck the spot
In which her mother's dear remains resposed,
Garlands of white immortelles with her brought;
And, as her tears fell fast, she fondly wished
She had, while yet an infant, passed away,
Like that dear brother who so sweetly slept
Beside her mother. At a cottage near,
Her maiden tarried, where the matron dwelt
Who kept the chapel keys,—an aged dame,
Whom Thecla from a child had known, and loved.
Admittance gained, she near the window took
Her station, which o'erlooked the pathway named,
And there, concealed from sight, in silence watched.
Nor was it long before two forms emerged
Upon her sight—one recognised too well;
The other was a female, young, and fair,
Attired in all the showy finery,
Which vanity, with poverty combined,
So oft, but so mistakenly, assumes.
They paced the path engaged in gay discourse,
While the light laugh of thoughtless levity
Fell not unfrequently on Thecla's ear—
Though Death's sad emblems lay around them spread,
Telling their solemn tale.

She could not hear
Their words, save when they near the window passed,

When, through an open pane, she sometimes caught
A broken sentence. Though their interview
Was not prolonged, it seemed an age to her.
At length they paused, and she distinctly heard
St. Maurice say: "Farewell, my sweet Clotilde,
"And think of me, until we meet again;"
Then, on her blooming cheek he pressed a kiss.
And thus they parted,—vanishing behind
The chapel,—while she stood, as in a dream,
Scarce able to believe the recent scene
Was a reality—but she recalled,
'Twould not be well to linger on the spot,
So sought her maid, and homeward took her way.
(But Antoinette, who knew it was the day
When Thecla visited her mother's grave,
Felt no surprise, and no enquiry made.)
Thecla, secluded in her own boudoir,
Passed that sad day; but, on the ensuing morn,
She told what she had seen to Antoinette,
Requesting she would, to her father's ear,
Disclose what well she knew would pain him much,
And take such measures as she deemed it best,
St. Maurice's future visits to prevent.
But great was the surprise the maiden felt,
When Antoinette, though she expressed concern,
Essayed to palliate St. Maurice's guilt,
Remarking that such faults, unhappily—
Among the young and gay in fashion's sphere—

Were now so frequent, that 'twere vain to look
For faultless characters from frailty free;
And that, in case St. Maurice should express
Repentance, and a solemn promise give
Of reformation, Thecla would but act
A Christian's part, to pass by his offence.
"Remember Thecla," she demurely said,
"We all are sinners in the sight of Heaven,
"And must forgive, as we would be forgiven."
"I do forgive him, and shall ever pray
"That Heaven may pardon him, and change his heart,"
Thecla replied, with mournful dignity;
"But, from my maid (a good and faithful girl),
"I learned, but yesterday, what (had I known
"Before I met him), I had never lent
"A willing ear to his perfidious vows;
"And nothing shall induce me to consent
"To be the false St. Maurice's wretched bride."
Her mother saw 'twere vain to urge her more,
Knowing, though gentle, Thecla could be firm.
But though she to her wise resolve adhered—
Despite the penitence St. Maurice feigned—
To shun the interview he vainly sought,
Yet sad and long appeared the weary days
That followed, when her mind, at first strung up
By indignation, gradually sank
'Neath that depressing langour sorrow leaves.
How many, by the fond pursuit of wealth,

Or other self-absorbing cares engrossed,
Grow cold to all the sensibilities
Which social ties, as tribute just, may claim,
And plead, as an excuse for callous hearts,
"They have no time for sentimentalism;"
But hearts by Christian kindliness imbued
Will not those claims ignore, but call to mind
That "deeds, not words," howe'er admired by some,
Is but a specious motto at the best.
But deeds and words of kindness, when combined,
Exemplify the perfect law of love,
In Holy Scripture for our guidance given.
But Brieton to the former class belonged,
And little sympathy was wont to show
To others' grief, and, though he Thecla loved,
Made no attempt her sorrow to console;
But when he saw that time did not restore
Her cheerfulness so soon as he had hoped,
He urged her in society once more
To seek amusement's restorative powers.
But Thecla's mind revolted from the thought—
Conscious that her engagement had been known
To many of her friends. Now Antoinette,
Since Thecla had refused to lend an ear
To her attempts to palliate the base
And heartless course St. Maurice had pursued,
Assumed an air of injured dignity,
And cold and distant in her manner grew.

But Father Claude expressed more sympathy
Than was his wont—which ended in advice
That Thecla, for a while, at least, should leave
Her home and friends, and seek some kind retreat,
Where, by devotion's sacred exercise,
She might regain tranquillity of mind.
"It is not solitude, I recommend,"
He added, "but that you should try to gain
"Admission to some pious Sisterhood;
"One, in especial, is well-known to me,
"Whose blessed inmates pass their happy days,
"Beneath their kind Superior's gentle eye,
"In mutual love, and occupy their time,
"Not merely in devotion's exercise,
"But partly in those works of pleasing skill,
"Made to subserve the cause of charity."
Thecla, with all the restlessness of grief
That seeks the mitigation brought by change,
Began to fancy she could solace find
In such society, diversified
By sacred rites and solemn services.
She, therefore, told him, if her father gave
Consent, she would retire for a while
To this retreat, but would not bind herself
There to remain for longer than six months;
As she (her father willing) could prolong
Her stay, if happy there; and Father Claude,
Glad to succeed thus far, appeared content.

Brieton was with his daughter loth to part,
But hoping the experiment would tend
To check the fond romantic visions raised
In Thecla's mind, of convent happiness;
He gave consent, but on a promise given
That, when six months were passed, she would return
To him once more. It was by Antoinette
Accompanied, that Thecla left her home,
And reached the convent of "St. Lesbia's,"
Which rose amid a lonely quiet spot,
By trees surrounded, which, in summer time,
A pleasing aspect gave the ancient pile.
She oft had passed the place, in days gone by,
And gazed on it with reverential awe,
As on a holy spot, inhabited
By beings of a far superior kind
To those who mingle in this outer world,
And where she, even then, had sometimes thought
That, should some unforeseen misfortune rob
That world of the attractions now possessed,
She would within its sacred walls retire,
And join its blest and happy Sisterhood.

CANTO XX.

THE DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT.

"There is a time for all things under the sun."

There is a time for sorrow's part,
  A time for mirth and song,
But oft the erring human heart
  That season judgeth wrong;

For impulse heeds not reason's voice,
  But weeps and smiles in vain,
As children o'er a flower rejoice,
  Or mourn a nettle's pain.

Should bright success its light afford
  To gild thy prosperous way,
While pomp and pleasure spread the board
  And prompt the revels gay.

If earthly joys thy heart beguile
  And banish heaven,—'tis madness;
Howe'er the flattering world may smile,
  'Tis not a time for gladness.

When stern affliction bows the head
  And fills the heart with gloom,
When age or sickness round us spread
  The shadows of the tomb.

Yet, souls sustained by heavenly might
  Find solace in their sadness,
And e'en 'mid sorrow's darkest night
  Discern a ray of gladness.

'Tis painful to the conscientious mind—
That wishes to approve itself to heaven—
When duty's path seems in a shadowy cloud
Of dark perplexity and doubt involved:
And Catherine, as we told, long sat alone,
In troubled thought, watching, scarce consciously,
The sable clouds, portentious of a storm,
In gloomy grandeur lour, like coming ills.
But Catherine, happily, was soon relieved
From her dilemma by a few brief lines,

By Brieton penned, stating that circumstance
Painful, but unforeseen, had broken off
The intended union; but left unexplained,
What that unlooked-for circumstance might be.
Nor did a note from Antoinette received,
Throw any light upon the mystery,—
But stated that her daughter had resolved
In convent walls to sojourn for a while,
And seek religious aid; but 'twas her wish
Her sorrows should not be intruded on,
E'en by the visits of her dearest friends,
And, therefore, it was deemed the wisest course
Not to reveal the place of her retreat.
Catherine well knew that Antoinette's ideas
Of truth's requirements, differed from her own,
And doubted whether Thecla really wished—
Or even knew—the interdiction laid
Upon the visits friends might wish to pay.
Great was her sorrow and regret to find
That her loved niece should thus immure herself:
Nor was her grief from apprehension free,
For she was well aware through convent gates
Ingress was far more easy to obtain
Than egress often proved, and wondered much
That Brieton should have yielded to her wish.
Soon as the day for her reception came,
Thecla—by Antoinette accompanied—
Silent and sad, St. Lesbia's Convent sought,

Where its superior, with a winning smile,
Received them both, and with her mother held
A lengthened conference in her private room,
While Thecla o'er the mansion, or, at least,
The greater part, was by a sister shewn.
In one apartment they its inmates found
Engaged in fancy work. Their cheerful air,
And the kind smiles with which they welcomed her,
To Thecla's unsuspecting mind conveyed
The thought that she had entered an abode,
Which peace and love their dwelling-place had made.
She little knew its inmates had been trained,
When strangers came, to play a studied part,
And that too many veiled a blighted heart
With outward shew of happiness and joy.
It was with fond expressions of regard—
Which Thecla did her best to think sincere—
That Antoinette took leave. The first few weeks
The maiden felt much pleased with all she saw:
The air of calm, though sad solemnity,
Which seemed the very building to pervade,
Was soothing to a mind subdued by grief.
The choral services at morn and eve,
Performed by voices trained with skilful care,
Delighted one, from her temperament
Deeply susceptible of music's power;
While in the employments daily carried on
In aid of funds for charitable works,

She felt an interest, and took a part.
As for the sisters and superior,
Nought could exceed the kindly sympathy
Which, for awhile, was shewn to her by all:
And Thecla had, at length, begun to hope
She might be happy yet. The only thing
That marred her pleasure was that she perceived
They seemed to view her as a postulate,
Who fully meant to join the sisterhood
When her probation should have passed away.
But when she felt herself compelled to state,
That duty to her father would preclude
A longer stay than what her vow required,
She saw displeasure's cloud upon their brows.
The lady mother frequently expressed
Her grief that Thecla, having left the world,
Should feel a wish in its delusive scenes
And empty joys again to take a part:
Nor failed to hint that such a state of mind
Resemblance bore to hers who, looking back
Upon a spot to dread destruction doomed,
Became a saline pillar on the plain.
In vain did Thecla urge her father's wish,
And tell her of the promise she had given;
She found, to her surprise, the lady deemed
Those sacred reasons of but little weight;
For she, like many of her Church, could quote
The Holy Scriptures—when it suited her—

In garbled form, or in perverted sense.
And hence, to Thecla's natural appeal,
She only answered by reminding her,
That Christ affirms that they who parents love
More than Himself, unworthy will be deemed
Of His regard, who bids us to resign
All for His sake. Thecla was not convinced—
Though silenced—as the lady could perceive,
And from that time, her once kind manner grew
Distant and cold,—a change which soon became
Extended to the sisterhood, who seemed,
Thenceforth, to look upon her as a spy,
Rather than friend; and, chilled by their reserve,
Thecla began to count the weeks and days
That intervened before the time arrived,
Which from her vow would free her, to return
Once more within her father's house to dwell:
For, sooth to say, besides the change detailed,
The bright romantic hues—by fancy given
On her first entrance to conventual life—
Were fading fast; she found the peace and love,
Described as reigning 'mid the sisterhood,
Was but a vision, and that jealousy,
Discord, and selfishness are not confined
To any sphere. Some who, when first she came,
Appeared like angels, on acquaintanceship
Proved only erring mortals like herself;
While others—apathetic and severe—

Seemed almost void of human sympathy,
And all that gives a charm to social life.
She did not often hear from Antoinette,
And when she did, her letters ne'er expressed
Regret for Thecla's absence, or a wish
For her return,—but "hoped her daughter dear,"
Had, in St. Lesbia's sacred dwelling, found
The solace which, to truly pious hearts—
With sorrow pierced—so welcome ever proves.
Her father seldom wrote, and when he did
She thought the hand and style were scarce his own;
For well she knew, no letters went or came,
Unknown to the superior, and the fear
That they were opened, nor unfrequently
Suppressed, perchance,—or garbled, to her mind
Brought many a pang. She had but too much cause
For these suspicions; for it once had chanced
That she had been requested to convey
A note to the superior, who was then
In her retiring-room, in which she spent,
Each day, an hour with Sister Jacqueline,
Who—as 'twas whispered by the novices—
Possessed a "wondrous gift"—though some surmised
It had by frequent practice been acquired—
Of skilful, imitative penmanship.
When Thecla reached the apartment where the two
Were usually engaged, she gently rapped,
Entrance to gain; but, hearing no response,

She ventured in, and found, to her surprise,
The room was empty. Something unforeseen
Had caused them to depart in haste, and leave
The door unlocked. A table, thickly spread
With papers, letters, books, and manuscripts,
Met Thecla's eye, which fell, unwittingly,
Upon a sheet of paper, covered o'er
With specimens of different handwriting.
One bore a striking semblance to her own;
But, knowing 'twould be dangerous to remain,
She hastened from the room, while to her mind
There rose the painful thought—"Ah! who can tell
"But that the letter to my father sent,
"In which I told him I retained no wish
"My stay within St. Lesbia's to prolong,
"Was altered, or withheld? Would that the time
"Of my probation to its close drew nigh;
"But four long months, alas! must intervene
"Ere—for I must not break my sacred vow—
"I pass, with gladdened heart, these weary gates."

CANTO XXI.

THE FAITHFUL MONITRESS.

UNWELCOME TRUTHS.

Unwelcome truths,—through every age
  Rejection is your fate;
Or, like the sybil's mystic page,
  Acceptance, when too late.

The faithful warning—though sincere,
  And breathed by wisdom's voice—
But seldom finds a patient ear,
  Or checks a wilful choice.

E'en truths that friendship must not hide—
  Though grieved the loved to pain—
Too often, by offended pride,
  Are met with cold disdain.

For most prefer the silken tongue,
  By acquiescence taught,
And love to hear the siren song,
  With soothing flattery fraught.

In ancient times, the lying seers
  Pleased Israel's monarch well;
But he, who man disdained to fear,
  And shunned not to foretell

That Ahab would in battle fall,
  Was doomed affliction's chain
To wear—immured in prison walls—
  Till he returned again.

He ne'er returned—but met his fate,
  And perished in the fight:
And they may mourn—when all too late—
  Who faithful counsel slight.

"O! home, sweet home! there is no place like thee:
"The very sky seems o'er thy roof to shed
"A sacred charm of welcome and of rest."
So poets write, and bards romantic sing;
And, doubtless, many a heart responsive beats
In happy homes, where peace and plenty reign.

But 'tis not every home where birdlings sing,
Or woodbines twine, or e'en where peace resides;
For there are many in whose joyless breasts
Those minstrel strains no pleasing echoes wake:
Full many an orphan youth is located
In a paid lodging, or a master's house,
Where scarce the shadow of a father's care,
Or spark of true maternal tenderness,
Cheers the cold shelter that he calls his home.
How many a hapless maiden gives her hand
To one she loves not, to escape a home
Where treatment harsh had been her daily lot
'Neath a stepmother's rule. How many a wife
Pines 'mid a joyless dwelling, doomed to pass
Her days beneath domestic tyranny—
A patient household drudge, with no reward
Derived from kind appreciating love.
E'en where affection sheds its kindly beams,
Dread poverty—with all its cares and woes—
Oft spreads an anxious and depressing gloom
O'er homes where sunny gladness else would reign.
How highly favoured they whose homes are cast
Where peace, and love, and competence reside,
And pious minds with gratitude adore
The gracious Giver of all earthly good,
In daily worship breathed from hearts sincere.
When Adeliza reached the mansion lone,
To which her widowed mother had retired—

(Beneath whose care her youthful days had passed
In selfish happiness, with little thought
Beyond this fleeting world's delusive joys),
She had to meet the cold upbraiding looks
Of that sad mother, who—from source unknown—
Had, to her sorrow and displeasure, learned
That Adeliza, whom she had supposed
To be a duteous daughter of the Church,
Had on an infidel bestowed her heart.
Full many a stern reproving homily
She failed not on her daughter to bestow;
But Adeliza bore them patiently,
Consoled by knowing that her father's will
An independence had secured to her,
Which she could claim ere many months elapsed,
And fully purposing to carry on
A correspondence—through the medium
Her thoughtless cousin's proffered aid supplied—
With the loved idol in her heart enshrined.
The dull monotony of country scenes—
After the gay excitement pleasure brings—
Was deeply felt; for much that once had charmed,
Since her return, had lost its power to please.
Her chief delight was in her own boudoir
To read the epistles penned by Irvindale,
Or write to him, or of her lover talk
To Rosa, her young bower woman, whom she made
Her confidant. She was a damsel gay,

Whose ready sympathy and thoughtless mirth
Pleased her young mistress well.

Brought up by those
Who feared not God, nor for religion cared,
She readily imbibed the sentiments
By Adeliza learned from Irvindale;
For, like her mistress, to this present world
Her heart was given, and cared for nought besides:
And, hence, she was not sorry to believe
A day of judgment and a future state
Were fables which need not be credited.
With this companion, Adeliza oft
Would ramble 'mid the pleasing scenery
Which round her mother's lonely mansion lay,
And sometimes rested at a cottage near,
Where dwelt in comfort, though in poverty,
Two pious Protestants who once had lived
In England; both had days of sorrow seen,
Although still young, and one, though faded now,
Had justly been considered beautiful.
Her courteous manners and intelligence
Had Adeliza's fancy greatly pleased,
Who oft would linger to converse with her,
And hear her tell of England's rural scenes;
For in its agricultural provinces
She had been born and passed her early days.
But Beatrice her private history

Had ne'er disclosed, though Adeliza felt
A wish to hear it she could scarce repress.
One evening, when with Beatrice alone—
For Rosa tarried at a cottage near—
She from her lips the mournful narrative
At length obtained, and failed not to express
Her kindly sympathy; "But," added she,
"How strange it seems, that one so good as you
"Such heavy trials should be doomed to bear.
"But a dear friend, whose intellectual powers
"Are highly thought of, deems the Almighty takes
"No cognizance of what may pass on earth;
"He thinks 'tis left to chance, or Nature's rule."
"Can it be possible," said Beatrice,
"That one whom you esteem, should hold such views.
"Did not our Saviour—whom your Church allows,
"As well as ours, to be the Son of God—
"Declare His Father reigns o'er heaven and earth,
"And that, not e'en a sparrow to the ground
"Falls unregarded by His gracious eye?
"And as to my deserts—alas! we all,
"As sinners, His displeasure have incurred,
"And must not murmur at His righteous will,
"But rather praise Him for the wondrous grace
"Which he hath shewn in giving His dear Son,
"A ransom for our souls: who kindly bids
"Our heavy-laden hearts to come to Him
"For peace, and pardon, and the blessed hope

"Of bliss beyond the grave. Perchance to you,
"Dear lady, life, as yet, has happy been;
"But grief may come: and even should it not,
"O! think how soon our days on earth will pass,
"With all their joys, and leave us in the grave,
"And they who have not made their peace with God
"Can in His heavenly kingdom have no place."
"You love to harp on melancholy themes,"
Said Adeliza, with a forced smile.
"Of course, we all must die; but the dear friend
"Of whom I spoke no terror feels of death,
"But looks on it as an eternal sleep,
"And holds the gloomy book from which you draw
"Your mind-depressing views, as one replete
"With legendary fables. Sin, he deems
"As human frailty: Satan as a myth,
"Of superstition's morbid fancy born."
"I know," said Beatrice, "the Tempter's craft
"Is shewn in leading us to disbelieve
"His being and his power, and thus become
"An easy prey to his ensnaring wiles.
"Fear is our wisdom, if it leads our souls
"To look for aid to Him who overcame
"The powers of darkness, and the victory gives
"To all His faithful followers. They who seek—
"Whoe'er they be—to separate your soul
"From Christ—our only hope—are not your friends:
"They are your enemies—your deadly foes—

"Who of the guilty deed must give account
"At the last day!" Just then, appeared the form
Of Rosa—gay and light—who came to attend
Her mistress home. The lady, much annoyed,
Rose hastily, and, with a cold farewell,
Turned homeward,—while the faithful monitress
Stood gazing after her, with tearful eyes,
Till, from her view, amid an avenue
Of stately trees, the pair had disappeared.

CANTO XXII.

BEATRICE.

THE WRECK.

He lingered on a sandy beach,
  Where many stood to gaze
On what had been a gallant ship—
  The pride of other days—
But now a shattered ruin lay
Upon the shore of that lone bay.

"Alas!" he thought, "I saw thee once—
  Launched on the deep blue seas—
A stately form, in triumph ride:
  While, floating on the breeze,
Thy pennant proudly raised on high,
Seemed foe and tempest to defy.

Meet emblem of the mournful wrecks
  That mark the tide of fate—
Of youth, and strength, and beauty's pride,
  And hearts with hope elate;
And minds that talents once could boast,
But now in drear oblivion lost.

Yet gentle hearts, whose faithful love
  Owns duty's sacred sway,
Oft fondly cling to wrecks forlorn,
  When coldly cast away
By that vain world that once could praise
The gifts that graced their palmy days.

Delusive life! thy surface wears
  An aspect calm and bright
As ocean's waves, when silvered o'er
  By Summer's beaming light.
But who can trust the treacherous sea,
Or mortal life's uncertainty?

Some minds, with stern and stoic pride,
  Misfortunes strive to brave;
Some sink like wrecks, when hope's denied,
  Beneath the yawning wave:
While some on idols vainly call—
Like Jonah's mates—when troubles fall.

How happy they who call on Him
  Whom wind and sea obey,
Who in His promises confide,
  And for His mercy pray.
The prayerless sluggard—Scripture saith—
"Desireth, and yet nothing hath."

But souls sincere, that seek His grace,
  He never will forsake,—
Nor suffer them of faith in Him
  A shipwreck sad to make:
Hope is their anchor, sure and true,
Till Heaven's bright land appears in view.

"When the earth and skies are fled,
    "I shall meet thee!
"When the sea gives up her dead,
    "Thou wilt greet me!
"Though in death's dishonour sown,
"We shall stand before His throne—
"Glorious forms, whom He will own—
    "There—I'll meet thee!"

The much-grieved Beatrice, from that sad day
Breathed many a prayer at morn and evening's hour
For the lost sheep, deluded by the love
Which, for the creature, love divine ignores.
It has been told already she had come
From England. She had been the only child
Of parents who their peaceful lives had passed
In humble comfort, though by labour earned.
Unhappily, their dwelling-place was fixed
Near to a marshy spot where fever lurked,
Of which they both, eventually, became
The victims: and their much-loved child was left
A helpless orphan, scarcely ten years old—
With a small pittance—to the dubious care
Of relatives, who viewed their hapless charge
But as a burden. Had not worldly pride
And sense of shame their voices 'gainst it raised,
They to the parish would have gladly left
Their little niece. The husband held a farm,
And, by his neighbours, wealthy was esteemed.
His wife—a purse-proud, callous-hearted dame—
But little kindness shewed to Beatrice,
But on her daughter, Caroline, bestowed
A fond indulgence, which injurious proved.
Sad was the contrast, by the orphan felt,

'Twixt her lost parents' ever tender care,
And the neglect and harshness shewn her now:
And many were the bitter tears she shed
When in her meanly-furnished garret left.
Her cousin, Caroline, inherited
Her mother's faults, and looked on Beatrice
As a dependent, who was bound to bear
With her capricious whims and haughty airs.
But Beatrice—although affectionate,
When kindly treated—had a temper high,
And, to unfeeling tyranny unused,
Did not with perfect meekness bear her lot.
At length, to Beatrice's intense relief,
Her cousin to a boarding-school was sent
To learn some shewy light accomplishments.
The village day-school—where she only learned
To read and write—was education deemed
Amply sufficient for their orphan niece;
But she was happy there, and progress made,—
And met with one towards whom her heart was drawn
By the sweet bonds of sympathy and love;
And childhood's friendship with their growth increased
And proved to each a source of life-long joy.
Jemima's mother better days had known
Ere to that rustic village she had come.
Her husband died at sea, and what he left,
By bankrupt relatives had been reduced.

Alas! how little speculators think
What misery they often spread around—
What broken hearts, perchance, their victims prove.
But to return: the widow sought retreat
In a small dwelling 'mid the village lone;
But by a friend, who had her husband known,
Her son was placed at school for some few years:
Then, as a cabin-boy, went out to sea.
During his school-days—at vacation time—
He oft would join his sister and her friend
In rambles 'mid the rural scenery.
He was a gentle boy—at least to them—
Though by his schoolmates wild and daring deemed,
And somewhat combative; but, as he grew,
The pious principles which in his heart
His mother strove to plant—with many prayers
That grace divine her efforts might attend—
Took root, and, by their influence, subdued
His natural faults, and formed a character
Esteemed by those who Christian virtues prize.
The aunt of Beatrice was, by her poor
Uncultured neighbours with much deference viewed:
For wealth has, in a village, potent sway,
E'en when with vulgar mind and manners joined.
Jemima's mother naturally refused
To join the obsequious homage many paid,
And, hence, incurred the lady's enmity.
And on the friendship—which, to Beatrice

Was like a sunbeam in her joyless life—
She looked with much displeasure; and, ere long,
When Caroline from boarding-school returned,
The luckless Beatrice her trials found
Greatly augmented, for—although not made
An actual "Cinderella," by her aunt—
She was in menial offices employed,
As helper to the house, and dairy-maid.
But Caroline, in novel reading, dress,
And visiting, her listless hours employed:
While towards Beatrice she still displayed
Assumptive insolence, in secret fed
By envy, for she saw that—spite of all
The advantages her father's wealth procured—
She failed to excite the admiration won
By Beatrice, whose lovely countenance
And gentle manners favour gained from all.
Yet Beatrice, without religion's aid,
Perchance, had murmured at her painful lot;
But from the pious widow she had learned
Much that, through grace, now influenced her mind:
And since the love of Christ within her heart
Had gained an entrance, its constraining power
Enabled her to bear the sense of wrong
With patience, and revengeful thoughts repress.
But 'twas a heavy trial when her friend,
Jemima, left to be the wife of one
Who came from Brussels, whither he returned

And took her with him, to the mutual grief
Of her loved mother, and her school-fellow.
Jemima, too, the separation felt,
And when they parted, drew from Beatrice
A promise she would visit frequently
Her widowed mother, now so lonely left:
For well she knew how much that mother's heart
Would feel her absence, more especially
As Manfred, now, was far away at sea
With the kind friend who had his father known
In days gone by, and cherished towards the son
A feeling of paternal interest.
His mother and the gentle Beatrice
Grew much attached, and as the widow's sight
Was failing, Beatrice would often stay
To read to her from Scripture's sacred page.
And when, at times, the much-tried Beatrice
Would of her unkind relatives complain,
She would remind her of the solemn truth
That we are sinners, in a world of woe,
Who should not for enjoyment vainly look,
But seek a title to the realms of bliss
Through Him who hath heaven's kingdom opened wide
To all believers. Oft the mother's heart
Was gladdened by the letters they received
From Brussels,—for Jemima often wrote.
Manfred's epistles came less frequently,

But always breathed the filial tenderness
And genuine piety which filled his heart.
Though but a cabin-boy a short time since,
He soon not only in position rose,
But in his friends' esteem. At length there came
A letter, which announced that they might hope
To see him, though he feared his stay would prove
Brief and uncertain; still, his mother's heart
Was filled with joy and gratitude to heaven,
And Beatrice the brother of her friend
With pleasure welcomed, though, at first, he seemed
A stranger: for the boy was now a man,—
Tall, and with features bronzed by sunny climes,
Yet handsome still, while on his countenance
The same expression of determined will,
Of honest truth, and kindliness of heart,
It wore in early days, remained unchanged.
Of those past days, and of his sister dear,
They often talked; and, ere he left again,
They loved, but both the secret strove to hide,
Not only from each other—but themselves.
For Manfred wished, as yet, no ties to form,
Lest with the sacred duty which he owed
His widowed mother, they should interfere.
And Beatrice affection's early bud
Strove to repress, uncertain, as she was,
If aught beyond esteem and friendship dwelt
In Manfred's breast. But when the summons came,

To bid farewell to England, and his friends,
Each felt a pang they had not thought to feel.
During his stay, her aunt with watchful eyes
Her frequent visits to the widow marked:
For the dislike which disappointed pride
Had in her bosom towards the mother wrought—
As told before—extended to the son.
Besides, her niece had ventured to refuse
One who a large and prosperous farm possessed—
A match which would have gratified her pride—
And which she, therefore, urged her to accept.
But, sooth to say, the youth who sought her hand
Bore no resemblance to the gentle swains—
"Strephons" and "Lubins" courteous and refined
As those who in Arcadia's regions dwelt—
With whom the pastoral writers of an age
Not long gone by, once peopled poetry;
For he was covetous of this world's wealth,
With manners coarse, and rude unfeeling mind.
One day her aunt, when calling on her friends—
For to the poor her visits ne'er were paid,
Except to pry into their humble homes,
And catechize them for extravagance,—
She saw a youthful pair, who seemed engaged
In earnest converse, walking in a lane,
In whom she quickly recognised the forms
Of Beatrice and Manfred. Neither saw
The matron, for the hearts of both were sad,

For he was telling her that he must leave
Sooner than he had thought; and on the day
Ensuing, in the evening, Beatrice
Towards his mother's cottage bent her way,
When—much to her dismay—she met her aunt,
Who, with insulting words and scowling brow,
Upbraided her with following after one
"Who was"—she said—"a very short time since,
"Naught but a cabin-boy." We scarce need say
The heart of Beatrice indignant swelled;
But she had learned the Christian self-command,
Which insult bears with patient dignity.
But painful was the struggle which it cost
The much-tried maid her calmness to regain,
Before she reached the dwelling of her friend,
Who, as it chanced, was absent, having gone
To visit one who, unexpectedly
Attacked by illness, needed friendly aid;
But, as she was expected to return
Each moment, Beatrice became induced
To rest awhile,—though Manfred was alone.
The deathly paleness of her countenance
Could not escape the watchful eye of love,
And of her health he ventured to enquire:
His voice, his look of earnest tenderness,—
Contrasted, as they were in her sad heart,
With the harsh coldness which so long had been
Her daily lot—o'ercame her fortitude,

And, spite of every effort to restrain
Her tears, they flowed apace, and told the grief
The prospect of his near departure caused.
But, quickly drying them, she gently said:—
"I am not ill; but you are well aware
"I have my trials, which, perchance, I feel
"Too keenly,"—and she tried to raise a smile;
But in that smile her lover saw a pang
Of smothered anguish which his bosom wrung.
Our best resolves with circumstance may change:
And Manfred, now, decided to disclose
The faithful love he had, as yet, concealed;
But its avowal was accompanied
By an explicit statement that, perchance,
Years might elapse ere 'twould be in his power
To offer her an eligible home,
Since his first care and duty still must be
For his dear mother—now in feeble health,
And sinking fast into the vale of years—
The comforts which she needed to provide:
And Beatrice esteemed him but the more
For views her heart entirely approved.
He left the ensuing day, and though she wept,
Each was consoled by the sweet consciousness
Of love returned, while hope its sunny ray
Threw o'er the future; for it was agreed
That when she was of age, and for her own
The little portion by her parents left

Could claim, she should her uncle's dwelling quit—
Which had to her a scene of trial proved
Since her first entrance—for the peaceful cot
Where her loved friend would, for awhile, remain,
Till Manfred could a better home provide.
A year had past, since Beatrice had made
The blest exchange, and Manfred's letters breathed
Devoted love for each, and pleasing hopes
And prospects, by the future, still held out:
When from Jemima came a letter sad,
In deep affliction penned, for she was now
A widow, with a slender pittance left;
And ah! before another year had past,
An overwhelming sorrow fell on both
The mother and betrothed: for Manfred's ship—
O'ertaken by a fearful storm—was wrecked,
And among those who perished in the deep,
Were Manfred and his friend. At first, they strove,
Amid the tortures of suspense, to keep
Hope's glimmering spark alive; but soon 'twas quenched,
By tidings which their hearts with anguish crushed.
His mother with submission bore the stroke;
But, e'en when grace divine sustains the soul,
Nature may fail, and from this vale of tears
She, to a better world, soon passed away.
But while she lingered on the bed of death,
Jemima came to bid a last farewell,

And on the broken-hearted Beatrice—
Soon as the funeral rites had been performed—
Prevailed to leave her native land, and share
Her humble home in Brussels; where the pair,
In Christian love and mutual sympathy,
Had long together dwelt, cheered by the hope
Of meeting those they loved beyond the grave,
In those blest realms where sorrow never comes.

CANTO XXIII.

THE FATAL PRESENT.

As gems and gold in earth may lie concealed,
So truth by fables oft hath been revealed,
And superstition's legends have conveyed
A moral suited for reflection's aid.

THE LEGEND OF "DEMON'S BOWER."

"See, Laura! what a splendid rose
"Sir Ethel gave to me,
"Upon my vest it shall repose,
"That I its bloom may see."

Her sister answered—"Wear it not;
"'Twas plucked from 'Demon's Bower'—
"So legends call the fatal spot—
"O! cast away the flower."

For there a maiden—fair to see—
Her Christian faith denied,
And, heaven-forgetting, vowed to be
A Moslem chieftain's bride.

And as she stood within that bower,
Where roses twined above,
Took from his hand an offered flower,
In token of his love.

Then said: "Again I'll meet thee, here;
"But, now, I must not stay,
"But in my father's hall appear
"Before the close of day."

She paused, expectantly, to hear
Her lover's fond farewell,
When, lo! upon her startled ear
Derisive laughter fell.

"Since thou, to win my love,"—he said—
"Hath dared Heaven's wrath to brave,
"Know thou art doomed—apostate maid—
"To be my life-long slave."

She raised her eyes towards his face,
  And saw depicted there—
While fled was every gentle grace—
  The look a fiend might wear.

With terror seized, the maiden fled!
  But soon, with wild dismay,
Perceived a form, of horror dread,
  Pursuing on her way.

She saw the village church appear,—
  She crossed its grave-strewn yard,
In hopes to find a refuge there,
  But every door was barred.

The demon paused before its wall,
  Then vanished from her sight;
But ah! she reached her father's hall,
  Bereft of reason's light.

When Irvindale first sought Zatahra's aid,
His mind was by the missing document—
And all which its recovery involved—
So much engrossed, he scarcely gave a thought
To aught the chest, besides it, might contain;
Although he knew both of the shawls and gems,

And prized them much, for they were costly deemed,
And to an Indian princess had belonged,
Who to his mother's line had been allied.
And when his title to his kinsman's wealth
Became established, and the weight removed
Which on his soul had pressed so heavily,
What once seemed baubles, to his mind recurred
As treasures he was not inclined to lose.
And when he gave Zatahra the reward
Which he had promised, she had half engaged
To use her power for their recovery.
But his enquiries—from time to time,
In writing made—no answer had received,
Till the philosophy which, for awhile,
He strove to exercise, was changed to wrath;
For he was anxious they should be regained
Before the masked ball, when, as a gift
To her he loved, he hoped they would appear.
He, therefore, sought, in haste, Zatahra's cave,
Resolved to call her to a strict account;
But in reply to his enquiries,—
Which, sooth to say, were not in dulcet tones,
Or silken phrases couched,—she made reply
With cool defiant air of covert scorn:—
"The jewels, now, have passed through several hands,
"But as their former setting has been changed,
"'Twould be no easy task to prove them yours:
"Nor can I tell in whose possession, now,

"They may remain; my power is limited;
"Nor will the oracle whom I consult,
"Decisive answers give to all I ask.
"As for the shawls, they, also, have belonged
"To several owners: one of them is lost
"To my research, the other may, perchance,
"Be yet recovered,—and, if so, shall be
"To thee restored." The breast of Irvindale—
By this unsatisfactory account
Of his lost gems—was with suspicion filled,
And, with a smile of bitter sarcasm,
He said: "'Tis strange, that since thy magic arts
"Availed to find a document, to thee
"But worthless parchment, it should fail thee, now,
"When jewels are concerned; methinks 'tis due
"To thine own character—unless, indeed,
"Witches to honest dealing lay no claim—
"That thou shouldst on thine oracle exert
"Thy influence, and induce him to reveal
"Where, or with whom, the jewels are concealed!
"Or I shall have some reason to surmise
"That thou—to female instincts still alive—
"Hast kept them back, to deck thy dusky charms
"On gala days—among the infernals held—
"When, with thy favourite demon, thou dost lead
"Some frantic dance, which may such orgies grace."
"Cease, mocker!" she replied, with screaming voice,
Like some enraged vulture; "If thou meanst

" I am a thief, and have thy gems purloined,
" Thou art a liar and a slanderer—
" Whom I denounce, and at thy peril bid
" Within my cavern to appear again."
She rose, and through the curtained doorway swept,
With haughty air, and brow like Etna's clouds,—
And Irvindale departed, much annoyed,
But calmed his ruffled temper with the thought.
That other ornaments might be obtained,
Before the festive meeting would take place;
And though no purchased jewels could possess
The interest and prestige attached to those—
Whose loss had vexed him—still, he was resolved
His gift—as far as wealth availed—should be
Worthy his much-loved Adeliza's charms.
Meanwhile, Zatahra, who (for we should give
The worst their due) had no intention formed
The jewels to appropriate to herself,
Opened a case, which she had just received,
From secret emissaries she employed—
Apart from preternatural agencies—
And found that it contained the missing shawl,
Of whose recovery she had hope expressed.
She spread it forth upon an ottoman,
And, eyeing it with gloomy triumph, said:
" 'Tis a meet present for the object fair,
" Who, now, his former idol's place supplies.
" But ah! thou gaudy piece of workmanship,

"Thou hast another mission to fulfil
"Than what he dreams of: thou shalt emulate
"The deeds of her who was thy owner once,
"And to whose race—though stained with many a crime—
"It is his pride to boast affinity."
Then, from a phial, o'er its surface bright,
She sprinkled what like water might have seemed,
And then replaced it, muttering to herself,—
"Lie there, till called on to enact thy part,
"Then perish—self-consumed—and, thus, elude
"The prying vigilance of chemic art,
"In case the tragedy suspicion wakes."
The appointed time, which was to intervene
Between her visit to Zatahra's cave
And that assigned for vengeance, slowly past
With Genevieve—whose restless, wretched mind,
Was with conflicting passions fiercely torn;
Yet, there were hours when conscience, if not love,
Relenting feelings brought; but these, alas!
Proved unavailing, through an incident
Which Madame St. Anaud contrived to turn
To what she chose to call a good account:
For she had, through some secret channel, learned
That Irvindale, one evening, 'mid his friends,
Had uttered—'neath the wine cup's influence—
Some light and cruel words, whose import cast
Reproach and ridicule on Genevieve:

Thus, adding to the wrong already done
To that unhappy lady. Woman's heart
May pardon injury, but insult—ne'er,
Save through the power of Christian principles,
But these ruled not the mind of Genevieve,—
And Madame St. Anaud had fondly hoped
That what she told would prove an antidote
To Genevieve's infatuated love.
Unhappily, it acted on her mind
Less like the chill torpedo's numbing shock,
Than scorpion's sting: and when the moon, once more,
In full-orbed splendour robed, adorned the skies,
She sought the Haunted House, resolved to claim
The vengeance by the Sorceress promised her.
Demonia on her sable mirror fixed
Her eyes intently, while the Countess spoke.
"Thou art avenged already," she replied;
"Already have the furies wrought e'en more
"Than thou, perchance, did'st wish. Behold the scene
"My tablet shews!" The Countess bent her head,
And, gazing, said: "I see a sleeping-room,
"Which to an ancient mansion might belong;
"'Tis by a taper partially illumined.
"I see a couch, with tapestry o'erhung,
"And near it is a table, on which stands
"A marble crucifix. I see no more."
"Nay, look again," the Sorceress rejoined:

"The light is now increased, and falls within
"The open curtains." Genevieve obeyed:
Then, with a piercing shriek of horror, fell—
Like one bereft of life. The shriek was heard
By Madame St. Anaud, who, much alarmed,
Rushed from the ante-room, and, with her aid,
The prostrate form,—though, senseless still,—was raised,
And to the open air in silence borne,
And laid upon a rude, half-broken bench.
The night-breeze sighed amid the trees, and swept
O'er her pale forehead,—damp with agony;
But—by the porteress summoned—soon appeared
The humble vehicle which brought her there,
In which her wondering friend—who dare not ask
An explanation from the Sorceress—
Conveyed her—now to consciousness restored—
To her long joyless, though still splendid home.
But not to friend, or any human ear,
Did the unhappy lady e'er reveal
What, on that fearful tablet, she had seen.
Within her chamber she was long detained
By serious illness, and—although restored—
In pleasure's circles ne'er was seen again.
'Twas but a few days previous to the time,
In which the painful scene we have described
Became enacted, that to Beatrice
Fair Adeliza had her visit paid;

And as, with Rosa, homeward she returned,
Gloom and displeasure loured upon her brow,
Though mingled with a look subdued and sad;
For slumbering conscience for a moment woke
Misgiving doubts, with boding terror fraught,
As she recalled the solemn warning given
By Beatrice—and on her history mused.
" What a sweet look of tender holy joy—
Thought Adeliza—" lighted up her eyes,
" Though filled with tears, as on the hope she dwelt
" Of meeting Manfred in the world above.
" Alas! the love 'twixt me and Irvindale,
" If—as he thinks—our being ends with life,
" Must perish in the dark oblivious grave.
" But yet, I cannot wish the Scriptures true,
" Since, if they are, there is a realm of woe
" As well as bliss. But, ah! I must not dwell
" Upon such themes; for, were I to become
" A melancholy saint, like Beatrice,
" I fear that I should not, for long, retain
" The love of Irvindale. I am but young,
" And prospects fair of earthly happiness
" Before me lie, with time enough to think
" Of solemn subjects." And, while thus she mused,
The gay and thoughtless Rosa—who had marked
The mournful shadow on her countenance,
And was, alas! versed but too skilfully
In all the arts that banish solemn thoughts—

Resolved to try her powers, nor tried in vain;
For she had spied, as they were setting out,
One of the servants bringing in a case,
Which, she surmised, contained the promised shawl,
For which she knew that Adeliza looked
With many a fond anticipating thought.
This pleasing piece of information, proved
Successful to divert her mistress' mind
From themes, which—if pursued—perchance, had brought
A blessing to her soul. But Rosa joyed
To see a smile once more light up her face.
'Twas settled, 'twixt the pair, that should it prove
The long-expected shawl, 'twere best to say
It was a present from Countess Du Bois;
And Adeliza, with a mirthful laugh,
Said to her maid: "I feel myself, again,
"Dear Rosa; though, I own that when I left
"The abode of Beatrice, her mournful tale
"And homily my mind had much depressed."
"I noticed it, dear lady," said her maid,
"And was much grieved; but, I have long observed
"That from your visits to the gloomy pair
"You oft return with sad and thoughtful brow.
"'Tis very well for her, poor faded thing—
"Who looks as if a not unwelcome grave
"Would soon release her from a joyless life—
"To talk of death, and all such dismal things;

"But you, dear lady, just in beauty's bloom,
"With health, and wealth, and friends, and—more than all—
"Adored by such a handsome gentleman,
"'Twould be a thousand pities to o'ercast
"Your happy days with thoughts more suitable
"For sickness, age, or convents' dreary walls."
Just then they reached their home, where soon the case
Was opened and the much-prized gift displayed,—
On whose elaborate design and hues
Of gorgeous splendour, with enraptured eyes,
Both maid and mistress gazed; and on the form
Of Adeliza, her attendant's hands,
With graceful skill, its tasteful folds arranged;
And 'neath a flowery arbour's verdant shade
They sat conversing, till the evening dews
And falling shadows told of night's approach:
Then to the house returned,—an ancient hall,
Which many a birth, and death, and wedding-day
Had, through successive generations, seen,
And many a tragic history might have told.
Ere Adeliza's feet its entrance past,
Faintness and nausea on her frame had seized,
Which, by herself and maid, became ascribed
To the rich perfume by the shawl exhaled,
Which though, at first, delightful to the sense,
At length, oppressive grew. 'Twas laid aside,

By Rosa, carefully, within a drawer;
But, to her great surprise, the ensuing day,
She found a fabric charred, which quickly fell
To ashes—when to light again exposed.
But grief and consternation now had filled
The mansion, for fair Adeliza lay
Upon her restless couch, with fever seized,
And though the aid of skill professional
Had speedily been called, the malady
Their efforts seemed to baffle and perplex.
But who can paint the anguish and alarm
That filled the mother's heart, and e'en the mind
Of Rosa was, by sorrow, solemnized;
For, oh! how different does Death appear
Seen in the distance—and, perchance, attired
In that romantic costume which the mind
Oft strives to throw around his ghastly form,—
To what, when drawing near, he casts aside
Each false disguise, and vindicates his claim
To be the "King of Terrors." Happy they
Whose faith and hope, on the Redeemer placed,
Can meet his dread approach without dismay.

CANTO XXIV.

THE TEMPTER'S REWARD.

When the earth and skies are fled,
    Shall I meet thee?
When the sea gives up her dead,
    Wilt thou greet me?
Must we stand before His throne
Whom we, now, deny—disown:
Where the lost their doom bemoan,
    Shall I meet thee?

The pain of absence, though severely felt
By both the lovers, had been greatly soothed
By many fond epistles—forwarded
Through her young cousins, who had also sent
The shawl, which, by Zatahra, had, at length,
Been secretly conveyed to Irvindale.

He, now, was waiting anxiously to hear
It had arrived, and kind approval met.
But when three days had slowly passed away,
And no epistle came to glad his eyes,
Suspense grew painful; but it soon was changed
To bitter grief, by a few lines—in haste
By Rosa penned—which mournful tidings brought,
And told—her much-loved mistress had been seized
With serious illness, and that of her life,
Her medical attendants could hold out,
To her distracted mother, little hope.
Without delay, the wretched Irvindale
Hastened from Brussels, and her dwelling sought,—
Bribed the domestics,—and an entrance gained
Within the mansion, where—with anxious grief,
At length, o'ercome—her mother had retired
To her own chamber, and the weary nurse,
After two nights of ceaseless watching, sought
A needed interval of brief repose,
In an adjoining room, and left her charge
With Rosa, who—deluded by the hope
That seeing Irvindale might tend to soothe
And calm the patient's agitated mind,
(Which to the fear of death had fallen a prey)—
Imprudently allowed an interview;
But, scarcely had she ventured to announce
The once-loved name, before he entrance made,
And saw—with startled eyes—upon a couch,

Pale as a corpse, a form recumbent lie,
Which, gazing on him with a ghastly look,
In which no traces of the love and joy
His presence once called forth, could be discerned,
Exclaimed—in accents wild, which pierced his soul:—
"And art thou come, destroyer of my soul,
"To gaze upon the ruin thou hast wrought?
"And see the wretch—who, had she never met
"With thee, perchance, had passed from life away
"In peace, relying on the Saviour's death,—
"Despairing, sink into eternity?
"Avaunt! thy presence does but aggravate
"The bitter anguish I am doomed to feel."
"O! speak not thus, my Adeliza, dear,"
Said Irvindale, "nor yield to thoughts of death;
"I trust some remedy may yet be found,
"Thy precious life to save. E'en shouldst thou fall
"A victim to His power, thy guiltless soul
"Can have no cause to fear for the result;
"For if there be a world of bliss above—
"As some believe—methinks, thy virtuous life
"Will gain for thee a ready entrance there."
"Thy flattering words no longer can deceive"—
She answered, with a groan—"for conscience tells
"I am a sinner; but, I might have gained
"Salvation's boon, through Him who died for all.
"Curst be my folly! which, to win thy love,
"Cast off my faith in Him. Canst thou redeem

"My soul, or save it from the wrath divine?
"Impotent idol, no! thou canst but stand
"And gaze on my despair. O! Irvindale,
"If aught my hopeless misery could increase,
"'Twould be to think I may be called upon
"To act as thine accuser. O! repent,
"Ere yet too late, lest thou shouldst share my doom."
And then, she wrung her hands and wildly raved,
While Rosa, who, half-paralyzed, had stood—
A witness of the scene—now interposed,
Entreating him to leave immediately,
Or she must call the nurse. In frantic grief,
The wretched Irvindale rushed from the house,
And plunged into a wood that near it grew;
There wandered, till a dark suspicion crossed—
With startling force—his agitated mind.
"Can it be possible"—such were his thoughts—
"The wicked sorceress, by malice urged,
"Has, by the use of her infernal arts,
"This fearful tragedy in secret wrought?
"I'll hie me to her, without more delay:
"If she can life destroy, perchance she knows
"Some means remedial, which may death avert."
And with this thought—which, through his tortured mind
Darted a flickering ray of hope forlorn,—
He Brussels reached, and sought the Haunted House;
But found Demonia absent, and was told—

Two or three days would, probably, elapse
Ere her return. The tortures of suspense,
In which he was compelled those days to pass,
Found no alleviation from the lines
By Rosa penned. At length, Zatahra came;
But answered his appeal, with aspect stern:—
"Did I not tell thee never to appear
"Within my cave again? Thou com'st in vain.
"I am no God, to save or to destroy!
"Nor can reverse what destiny decrees,
"Because it brings calamity to thee."
"And darest thou, thus, to mock my agony?"
He said—his wrath unable to control.
"If thy infernal power can death produce,
"Exert that power for her recovery—
"Of whom, I know, thou art the murderess—
"Or I will have thee, as a witch profane,
"To justice brought, and punished for thy crimes."
"Proud threatener! I defy thy frantic rage,"
She answered—with a laugh of withering scorn;
"Thy impotent revenge would but recoil
"Upon thyself: for know, that many a one
"Of grade and station higher than thine own,
"Have sought my aid,—and such are well aware
"That, spite of their disguise, I know their names,
"And much, besides, they would not have disclosed
"To the wide world. And dost thou vainly think
"That they who value character, would choose

"To risk the revelations I could make,
"To pleasure thee?—Begone! and, if the pangs
"Of certainty be better than suspense,—
"Know thou, that when the village church clock strikes
"The midnight hour, sad matrons are employed
"Robing thy Adeliza's lifeless form
"In snowy winding-sheet, and placing it
"Within the coffin's dark and narrow cell,—
"And may her image, whom thou didst beguile
"Of heavenly hope, for ever follow thee—
"Flit by thy side, 'mid pleasure's lighted halls,
"And, in the lonely hours of solitude,
"Before thee stand, and gaze into thy face
"With that heart-broken look of wild despair
"She wore when last you met—to meet no more;
"And when thou minglest with the boastful throng,
"Where fools each other's vain delusions praise,
"May the sad voice, which, on the bed of death,
"Accused thee as the murderer of her soul,
"Rise o'er the din of popular applause—
"Whose flattering sounds are wont to greet thine ear—
"And pierce thy soul with pangs retributive!
"And now, once more, I warn thee to depart,—
"Or, at thy peril, stay." And, as she spoke,
She on a brazier threw some withered leaves,
Which, instantly igniting, filled the cave

With stifling vapour, whose o'erpowering fumes
With swift extinction threatened life itself.
Now Irvindale, who, though he loved to boast
That death, to him—divested, as it was,
Of those illusive visions, fraught with dread,
Which faith in Christianity has raised,—
No terrors brought; yet, at its near approach—
Like many more—oft felt his courage fail,
Lest, when "the last great secret"—as 'tis called—
Became revealed, it might not bring him peace.
So he esteemed it prudent not to brave
The warning given, but to the entrance rushed,
And, half bewildered, homeward took his way.
The moon a faint and fitful light diffused,
And when he reached the lonely village church,
The pale phosphoric lights—which rustics call
Corpse-candles—rising from the grassy graves,
Danced wildly to the screech-owl's mournful wail,
Which mingled with the sobbing of the breeze,
Amid the gloomy trees that grew around.
Scarce had he passed the gates, when on his ear
The solemn sounds, which told the midnight hour,
With thrilling pathos fell, and brought to mind
Zatahra's fearful words, which now returned,
Replete with agony; for what—except
"The worm that never dies"—can be compared
With the dread pang the murderer of souls—
When conscience is aroused—must ever feel?

At length, he reached his home; when, on his desk
A letter lay, from which his eye recoiled,—
For ah! its sable border spoke of death.
With sinking heart he opened it, and found
The beauteous Adeliza was no more.
But, to his just reward, we now must leave
The tempter; and to that sad dwelling turn,
In which, so recently, the reckless maid
His fatal present had, with joy, received.
After he left her, for awhile she lay
Delirious; and, amid her ravings, called
On Beatrice,—entreating her to come,
Ere 'twas too late! The piteous appeal,
At first, was disregarded; but, they found
Reason's return seemed only to increase
The patient's anxious wish to see her friend;
So, spite of all the stern remonstrances
Her mother's spiritual director made,
She gave consent to send a messenger
For Beatrice, who hastened to the spot
Where lay the lately bright and blooming form,
Of whose fond visions death had made no part.
But, ere admitted to the interview,
'Twas the condition made with Beatrice
That she should ne'er divulge the state of mind
Of Adeliza, on the bed of death;
For 'twas the mother's fear, that should her child
Become a convert to the faith reformed,

She, at confession's hour, might be compelled
To tell her angry priest the unwelcome truth.
The pious Beatrice, with faithful love,
Ne'er left the unhappy sufferer—night, or day,—
While life remained; but, to her promise true,
No death-bed revelations ever made:
And, ere another year had passed away,
(Of treacherous consumption long the prey)
She, too, was slumbering in the silent grave.
A veil, impenetrable, therefore, rests
On the last hours of that misguided one,
Who, for a creature's love, rejected Him—
Through whom, alone, salvation can be found!

CANTO XXV.

THE DAY OF TRIAL.

O! grief,—while lasts thy reigning hour,
How strong is thy subduing power,—
Say, wouldst thou—left without control—
To thine own essence change the soul?

My only solace is to weep—
Like Mary—at the Saviour's feet,
With scarce a wish, and scarce a prayer,
Except to lie for ever there.

Just waking from the sad delusive dream,
Which prompted her retreat to convent walls,
We Thecla left, already doomed to feel
The dreary sadness of captivity.
The outer world—though left without a sigh—

Once more began to wear the fairy hues,
With which the imaginative mind of youth
Is wont to invest it; and her heart, at times,
Yearned for the sympathies of social life;
For few and faint were those which could be found
Amid St. Lesbia's frigid sisterhood,—
And e'en from these she had, of late, become
Excluded; but the change no purpose served,
Except her resolution to confirm—
To keep the promise to her father given.
Nor did she wish to court companionship
With those who, evidently, stood aloof,
With disapproval's cold repulsive air.
So, in her lonely cell, by choice, she spent
Full many a sad and solitary hour,
In silent musings on the painful past,—
Or looking forward, with an anxious heart,
To the now wished for time of her return
To her loved father, and the female friends,
Whose cheerful converse in remembrance rose
In contrast to the stern ascetic gloom
Which formed St. Lesbia's usual atmosphere;
And, by degrees, her heart began to turn
From earthly things, to those important themes
Connected with the welfare of the soul.
The truths of Revelation on the mind
Are often first impressed with saving power,
By preacher's voice, or reading Holy Writ;

But God, the Spirit, is not limited
To agencies external. Light divine
May reach the heart, and e'en the mental powers,
When human instruments have been removed.
Thecla, unhappily, had been deprived
Of all the advantages she might have reaped
From Catherine's gift, which she had been compelled
To leave at Orton Lodge, by Father Claude—
With stern injunctions, ne'er, with reckless pride,
To fancy she could hope to understand
What that mysterious, therefore, dangerous book
Contains; save when 'neath priestly guidance read.
And, thus discouraged, she had long resigned
All effort Scripture knowledge to obtain
From its pure fountain; but a change took place—
A wond'rous change—which e'en herself surprised.
Her mind seemed, now, to energy aroused,
By counter fears—for, "would it not be wrong,"
She thought, "without enquiry, to reject
"What might be truth?—for, how could she be sure
"The Papal Church's claimed authority
"Was heaven-derived?" And, thus, her mind was led
Its reasoning faculties to exercise,—
Though, in no proud or self-sufficient mood;
Nor did she fail, in earnest prayer, to ask
The aid our Lord has promised to bestow
On those who seek it, with a heart sincere.
And, as reflection deepened in her soul,

The arguments—scarce heeded at the time—
Heard from her aunt and cousin, now returned
To her remembrance, with convincing power;
And many portions of the sacred Book,
Which, at their social worship had been read,—
Recalled to mind—sweet consolation brought,
And led her in the Saviour's hands to place,
In humble faith, her soul's eternal weal.
The peace and joy which Thecla now derived,
From those enlightened views of Gospel Truth—
So wondrously imparted to her soul—
Were not without a drawback, fraught with dread,
When she remembered that her change of mind
Could not be, from the sisters, long concealed;
For conscience, now, forbade the worship paid
To Mary and the saints: nor could she make
Confession, nor the absolution seek
She once had deemed so indispensable.
But, though her heart with apprehension sank,
Yet, she resolved that, to the light received—
Through grace divine—she, still, would faithful prove.
Her trials soon commenced: the sisters, all—
And lady mother—were with horror filled,
And indignation, which no limits knew,
When they perceived that views heretical
Her mind possessed, and could not be displaced.
E'en those (and some there were) whose gentle minds
To kindness and compassion were inclined,

Yet,—taught to think that charity, to those
Who from the Church of Rome apostatized,
Was grievous sin,—their utmost efforts used
To chase relenting feelings from their hearts.
At first, 'twas thought, that—spite of all their care—
She must have made secretion of some books,
Which, from her aunt—who, they were well aware,
Was of the Church Reformed—she had received.
Strict search was, therefore, made; but all in vain,
And wrath and scorn her portion now became;
And had she, like some helpless prisoners there,
Been wholly in their power, 'tis probable,
Torture—which in St. Lesbia's silent walls
Was not unknown, though passing by the name
Of discipline,—her portion would have been;
E'en as it was, she had to suffer much,
Which, though with firm and meek endurance borne,
Her health affected,—fever seized her frame,—
Delirium followed, and, for many weeks,
'Twixt life and death she seemed to vacillate;
And though the malady became subdued,
Yet, her exhausted form unconscious lay,—
Apparently—to all that passed around.
But reason, still, at intervals returned,—
Sad intervals!—in which she fondly wished
That she might never from that couch arise,
But pass, from earthly woe, to heavenly bliss.
But we must not expect to choose the time

Of our release from suffering, or from life.
Strength came by slow degrees; but from her bed
She scarce had risen, when, to her cell, there came
The sister Amaranthe, with gloomy brow,
And told her Father Auriel desired
An interview, which must not be denied,
As he had something to communicate
Of serious import. With a fainting heart,
And trembling limbs, the summons she obeyed.
With looks severe, the rugged father met
The pallid invalid, whom he reproached
With having turned an ear impenitent,
To the kind admonitions and advice,
By which their saintly mother had, in vain,
Sought to reclaim her from the fatal path
Of heresy, which must perdition bring
To all who in their errors still persist;
"Unhappy girl!"—he added—"know, your guilt—
"Heaven's righteous judgments have already drawn
"Upon your head. This letter—just received—
"Bears the sad tidings of your father's death!
"While in your previous state, it was not deemed
"Advisable his danger to reveal."
Stunned by the blow, the hapless Thecla's mind,
At first, the tidings scarcely could believe;
But soon, such evidence became adduced
As brought conviction: and, o'erwhelmed with grief,
The wretched maiden to her cell was led—

Half-fainting. When alone, awhile she sat,
Gazing, with tearless eyes, upon a tree,—
The only pleasant thing, to cheer the heart,
Which from that grated window could be seen.
It chanced, a little bird had built its nest
Upon its boughs, and, flying to and fro,
Its young was feeding, and, as Thecla gazed
On that sweet picture of instinctive love,
"Ah! happy nestlings"—was her mental thought—
"Tended each day with fond parental care,
"And sheltered 'neath its kindly fostering wings.
"I, too, once knew a mother's tender love,—
"A father's kindly care. What am I now?
"An orphan, desolate! nay, worse than that,—
"Condemned, and hated, as a thing accursed."
And, as she realized the painful thought,
Tears and convulsive sobs, at length, relieved
Her bursting heart; and, when she grew more calm,
She read the letter by the father given.
It was from Antoinette, sent to announce
That Brieton was no more. The lines contained
Scarce aught of sympathy for Thecla's grief,
Though lavish in expressions of her own;
Yet, even these, a tone of anger breathed,
As of her husband's closing days she gave
A brief detail, and told that when, at length,
His malady a serious form assumed,
She had entreated him to seek the aid

Of Father Claude, to fit his soul for death;
But all her efforts unavailing proved,—
And, to her grief, he sent for Willoughby,
Who never quitted him, by night or day,
Till death; and—save herself—none were allowed
To see him; "and for me," she further said,—
"O'erwhelmed with sorrow to behold him fallen
"Beneath an influence fatal to his soul,—
"'Twas seldom I could summon fortitude
"To bear an interview." Now Antoinette,
When she this letter penned, was not aware
Of Thecla's altered views, and little thought
That what she thus revealed, would to her heart
Bring consolation sweet; for Thecla knew
That Willoughby would every effort use
To lead her father, with repentant faith,
To look to Him whose sacrifice avails—
E'en at the eleventh hour—for contrite souls;
Nor fail those efforts to accompany
With earnest prayers to heaven, on his behalf.
But, though this hope sustained her sinking heart,
She felt the sad bereavement's painful stroke,
As sensibility will ever feel:
And boding fears were mingled with her grief,
As she reflected on her helpless state,—
Left in the power of those, whom much she feared,
Would feel no scruple in detaining her—
A life-long prisoner, in those hated walls.

Brieton no apprehensions e'er had felt
For Thecla's safety; but, when death's dread form
Drew nigh, misgiving fears assailed his mind;
And, to his nephew, he revealed the place
Of her retreat, requesting—if her life
Were spared—that Catherine would (when the time
She promised in the convent to remain,
Had passed away) demand an interview,
And, tell her 'twas her father's dying wish,
That she should to her friends return again.
Catherine, her mission faithfully performed;
But was by the superior received
With frigid courtesy and stately air,
And told, that "sometime previous to the day
"Fixed for her leaving, Thecla's failing health
"Required a change, and, as her mother wished—
"For the same cause—to spend some months at Rome,
"She had consented Thecla to release
"From her engagement; and," she further said,
"I have, for reasons better to withhold,
"Declined, at present, further intercourse.
"And whether they would seek to make their home
"As boarders in a convent, or with friends,
"I know not,—nor have means to ascertain;
"But rather think it was her mother's wish,
"To be incognita, and I, of course,
"Am loth with that desire to interfere."

Catherine withdrew, with disappointed heart,
And, then, to Heathfield Villa bent her way,
And from the servants learned, that Antoinette
Had left her home, intending—as she said—
To pass some months at Rome; but bid them feel
No apprehensions, if she should not write
At present: her address they could not give.
So Catherine, again, with troubled mind,
Returned, while anxious fears oppressed the heart
Of Willoughby, lest Thecla should have been
Conveyed to Rome in secret—'gainst her will—
Or wrought upon, by some deceptive arts.
And who could tell, but what she was immured
Within some nunnery, to be detained
Until—by threatening and persuasion urged
To take the veil—her mind, at length, succumbed.
He could not bear the thought; so, made resolve,
Without delay, to make his way to Rome,
And every effort use, to ascertain
Where she might be concealed. We scarce need say,
That Catherine, with a willing heart, agreed
To aid his mission, though but slender seemed
The chances that success their search would crown.

CANTO XXVI.

THE CONVENT WARD.

SISTER LENORE TO HER BROTHER.

Your letter, by the father sent,
  Was welcome to my gladdened eyes,
Although, I own, with its contents
  I cannot, may not, sympathize;
For o'er me, since I saw thee last,
A change thou wilt regret, has past.

You hope I shall be happy here,
  And bid the sinful world farewell;
But know,—'twas only for a year
  I vowed within these walls to dwell,
And when that time has passed away,
Nought shall induce my longer stay.

I have not found the peace and love,
  Which I had fondly thought to find,
And oft the treatment that we prove,
  Is harsh, oppressive, and unkind.
And some—for whom I deeply grieve—
Wish, as I fear, but cannot leave.

Full many a maiden hither came,
  Constrained by friends—her parents dead—
Who could she now her freedom gain,
  Would gladly toil to earn her bread.
But, 'tis too late to hope redress,
These iron gates forbid egress.

Aware 'tis my resolve to go,
  They fain would much from me conceal,
Lest, of this prison-house of woe,
  My lips the secrets should reveal.
I pine to see the happy day
That bears me from its scenes away.

There is a staircase, dark and long,
  Which I am ne'er allowed to wind,
The chambers which to it belong—
  They say—are to the sick assigned;
But—more than once—when lingering near,
A shriek has met my startled ear.

I would not harbour thoughts unmeet,
  But, not long since, a sister died:
They laid the garland at her feet,
  She wore, when vowed a heavenly bride;
But when they happy deem the dead,
They place it on the lifeless head.

O! she was young, and fair to see,
  But was—alas!—a suicide,
O'er whose sad fate a mystery
  Must, sealed for evermore, abide;
For coroners esteem it rude,
On convent precincts to intrude.

What cares the unfeeling world to know
  How broken-hearted sisters die?
Or, if—immured in cells of woe—
  Bereft of reason's light, they lie;
Till, in the private burial spot,
  They sleep,—unpitied and forgot.

No state inspector ever comes—
  As in some lands—empowered to see
That none within these—so-called—homes
  By force or fraud, detained be;
Yet, England boasts, her laws bestow
Protective care on high and low.

Heaven's blessing rest upon their head,
  Who—spite of Romish scorn and hate—
The convent prisoners' cause have pled;
  O! may success their efforts wait.
A secret hand these lines will bear,
For seals are not respected here.

The vow which Thecla, on her entrance made,
Within St. Lesbia's,—not to quit its walls,
For six succeeding months, without consent
Of its superior,—she resolved to keep.
But oft, the painful fear oppressed her mind,
Lest, when those months were past, she still should be
Detained, with Antoinette's consent and aid;
For she had long had reason to suspect
That, between her and the superior,
A correspondence had been carried on,
E'en from the first, and could not but surmise
That Antoinette would deem it source of joy,
Were she to take the veil: nor did she err
In this belief,—for, by her father's will,
The portion of his wealth to Thecla left,

Would, in that case, to Antoinette revert.
But, ere the time for her departure came,
She was, one morning, summoned to appear
In the superior's presence, and informed—
That from her mother she had just received
A letter, stating, it was her intent
The scene of her bereavement to forsake,
And visit Rome, whose mild salubrious air,
She trusted, would her failing health restore;
And, further, it requested she would spare
Her daughter—for the few remaining weeks,
Which, of her promised time, might still remain—
To join her there, which, as she hoped, would prove
To both, a consolation, in their grief.
"I, to your widowed mother's natural wish,
"Am willing to accede," the lady said;
"Still hoping, that when health shall be restored,
"Your mind will to a proper state return:
"And should you, happily, be led to see
"Your fatal errors, ere you quit these walls,
"I, from her knowledge, gladly will conceal
"What would be like a dagger to her heart;
"But, if in heresy you still persist,
"'Twill be my painful duty to disclose
"To that dear friend, the heart-appalling fact."
Thecla no answer made, for, truth to tell,
She felt no confidence in ought that fell
From the superior's lips, nor had much faith

In Antoinette's professions of regard;
But, to remain within St. Lesbia's,
'Gainst hope itself, would seem to shut the door:
So, ere another week had passed away,
She—with a cold farewell—became dismissed,
And, in the charge of Sister Eulalie
And Father Lorrimer,—an aged priest,
Who had a mission to fulfil at Rome,—
Her journey took. Her grim companions kept
Unbroken silence,—much to her relief.
The evening shadows had begun to fall
When they appeared before St. Hermascind's,
Where Antoinette her domicile had made.
The carriage stopped before its iron gates,
And Sister Eulalie bade her alight;
She did so, when, to her astonishment,
It drove away, and vanished from her sight!
And she was left, bewildered and alone,
To gaze upon the dark and frowning pile,
Which rose against the sunset's glowing sky,
Like some gigantic spectre's gloomy form.
She crossed the courtyard with a sinking heart,—
The portal reached,—and rung, with trembling hand,
The bell. Ere long, the massive door unclosed,
And the stern porteress—whose scowling brow
No welcome spoke—appeared, and ushered her
To the superior's presence, in whose voice
And countenance displeasure seemed to lurk.

She told the wondering Thecla—pale and mute—
That when her mother first had quitted home,
She was in ignorance of the sad change
Which over Thecla's misled mind had passed;
But, while sojourning with a relative,
Became informed: and such was the effect
The tidings on her shattered nerves produced,
That illness followed, and, though now restored,
In some degree, it might, perchance, be long
Ere she was able to proceed to Rome;
Hence, she the charge of Thecla had consigned
To the superior of St. Hermascind's,
Hoping her pious influence might prevail
On her unhappy daughter, to return
To the blest shelter of the Church's fold.
"Fain would I view your guilt," the lady said,
"Through Christian charity's all softening veil,
"And think your recent illness may, in part,
"Have caused the dread delusion, which, I fear,
"It lies not in my power to dispel.
"But in St. Hermascind's there is a ward,
"Where those afflicted with disordered mind
"A refuge find, and oft, with care and time,
"Become restored,—though some, alas! remain
"Incurable for life: that case, I trust,
"Will not be yours; but, doubtless, much depends
"Upon yourself,—and I esteem it best
"To place you, for awhile, in this retreat,

"For your own good, and also to prevent
"The evil influence which might result,
"If one, thus tainted with heretic views,
"Were with the young unstable novices,
"Allowed to hold communion. To the world
"You cannot be permitted to return,
"While in your present state, for it would bring
"A grievous scandal on St. Hermascind's,
"To have it said—that one who had been trained
"In the true Church's faith should, from its walls,
"Go forth a base apostate; but, I hope,
"Our supplications to the Queen of Heaven—
"Who ever leans to mercy—may prevail
"To bring you back to her forgiving arms."
The stricken-hearted Thecla now perceived
She had but too much reason for the fears,
Which, since her father's death, had haunted her;
But, ere her bloodless lips could frame reply,
A nun appeared, to whom the lady gave
A charge—to Thecla scarcely audible—
Then said: "This sister, to your sleeping-room
"Waits to conduct you." With a sinking heart
And wildered mind, she followed, and was led
Through gloomy passages and staircase high,
Until they reached the entrance of a room
From whence there issued wild, discordant sounds,
Of mingled voices; but the sounds were hushed
When her conductress at the door appeared,—

And Thecla saw a chamber, large and drear,
With rows of couches, of the meanest kind,
Ranged side by side, and all, apparently,
By silent sleepers occupied, save one,
To which the sister, pointing, said—" For you;"
Then added—as she saw the startled look
On Thecla's countenance,—" be not alarmed;
" No dangerous patients here are located."
So saying, she abruptly turned away,
And Thecla, ere recovered from the shock
Her words had caused, heard, in the massive door,
The turning of a key, and then, the sound
Of her receding footsteps on the stairs.
The life-blood seemed to curdle at her heart,
For scarcely had that sound in silence died,
Before the inmates of that chamber dread,
Again their voices raised,—and some arose
And paced the room with wild and hurried step.
One hapless victim sat upon her couch,
Wringing her hands, and mournfully exclaimed:
" O! let me see my mother, once again.
" You say I was not born in wedlock's bands;
" But, still, she is my mother, and her heart
" Loves her poor child; but no one loves me here."
Then added, in a low and troubled voice:
" They mean to poison me,—I know they do,—
" Like Sister Bertha, who, but three weeks since,
" Was carried to the private burial ground,

"At midnight's hour. I know my cruel aunt—
"Who deems me as a family disgrace—
"Would at my death rejoice." Another form
Towards the grated window wildly rushed—
With terror pictured on her countenance—
Exclaiming: "See! it is the mourning-coach,
"Which, to the Inquisition's fearful walls
"Is come to bear me,—never to return!
"Though only for some idle words I spoke
"'Gainst the superior,—all unguardedly;
"O! sisters, hide me! screen me from their search."
One of the patients strove to quiet her,
Until, exhausted, she became more calm.
Then came a voice, whose plaintive tenderness—
So sweet and low—touched Thecla's gentle heart,
Though she could only indistinctly hear
The mourner's sad complaint, and thus it ran:—
"Ah! never more,—they tell me,—never more
"Shall I behold him; for on India's shore,
"They say, he died. They bid me take the veil;
"But, no! I will not,—for their words are false.
"'Tis not long since I those dear lines received,
"Which told me, he was coming o'er the seas
"To claim me for his bride; and oft, at night,
"When moonbeams on the convent garden shine,
"I see him walking 'mid the ancient trees,
"Or stand, with folded arms and eyes upraised,

"As if to gaze upon my prison-house,
"And ascertain the part in which I pine."
But, here, her voice seemed choked by rising sobs,
And Thecla's tears fell fast: then, as she threw
A glance around, she noticed some, who sat
Silent and motionless, like forms of stone,
Whose sad, but vacant, countenances bore
The soulless look of imbecility.
An icy shuddering ran through Thecla's frame,
As the dread thought arose,—"And am I doomed
"To pass my life with these unfortunates?
"Till (by depression's influence) subdued,
"I come, perchance, to be what I deplore.
"But let me leave events to Him who ne'er
"Forsakes His followers in affliction's hour;
"If true to Him, while reason is vouchsafed,
"Not e'en insanity shall separate
"My soul from His unchanging—faithful love;
"Nor let me from these hapless sufferers shrink,
"Who, if they sought Him, ere the mental light
"Was from their souls withdrawn, He will not leave,
"But o'er them watch with mercy's gracious eye.
"Insanity, though grievous to behold,
"Is less degrading, far, than wickedness,—
"Which oft, like fiends incarnate renders those
"O'er whom it reigns."—And with this thought, she knelt

Beside her pallet coarse, in earnest prayer,
For strength divine, to bear her mournful lot:
This done, exhausted nature sank, ere long,
In sleep, though harrassed by distressing dreams,—
Those sad attendants on a troubled mind.

CANTO XXVII.

THE WARNING.

LIGHT.

Fair offspring of the Word Divine!
  I love to gaze on thee,
Whene'er thy presence meets mine eye,
  In earth, or air, or sea.
In distant orbs of ancient birth,
Or glow worm glimmering on the earth,
Or, when called forth by chemic might,
Thy splendour pains the dazzled sight.

The rainbow's glowing arch reveals
  Thy rays of sevenfold hue,
Which nature's varied landscape paint
  With charms for ever new.
Yet not the deep research of thought,
Nor e'en the lore by science taught,
Thy nature fully can reveal,
Or all thy mysteries unseal.

Thou art the fair symbolic sign,
  Of knowledge, truth, and love,
An emblem of His attributes
  Who reigns in Heaven above,—
Yet left His radiant throne on high,
In human form, to bleed and die,
Our lost benighted souls to save,
From dark despair, and gloomy grave.

Thy presence charms the gladdened eye,
  As music doth the ear;
But, ah! in sorrow's mental night,
  Thy beams may fail to cheer.
But He who modelled nature's frame,
And calls the starry hosts by name,
Can heavenly light and peace impart,
When grief or fear becloud the heart.

THE DAWN.

Hail! gentle dawn, thy welcome light's
  First glimmering ray, methinks I see;
Soon shall the sable shades of night,
  'Neath thy pervading influence, flee.

The silver stars, with pensive ray,
  Still, lingering, muse o'er ocean's wave;
While Night her conference holds with Day,
  'Mid silence,—solemn as the grave.

The skylark's song shall hail thy reign,
  And opening flowers in beauty shine;
They never wake to grief or pain,—
  O! would that happy lot were mine.

Thou gleamest o'er the sacred spot,
  Where sleep the loved, 'neath churchyard wall;
But, ah! thy light will wake them not,
  Nor e'er to life their dust recall.

But chase, my soul, desponding gloom,
  And think upon that wond'rous dawn,
When to a lone, but guarded tomb,
  Sad mourners came, with hearts forlorn.

When lo! angelic forms appear,—
  Before whose face the watch had fled,—
Who say: "Why seek your Master here?
  "Your Lord is risen from the dead!"

I'll think of those who, through the night,
  Toiled, vainly, o'er the waters drear;
Till, on the shore, by thy pale light,
  They saw the Saviour's form appear.

Upon that shore, so dark and dread,
  A cheering fire was seen to shine,
And lo! a little feast is spread,
  And Jesus bids them—"come and dine."

How would their woeworn hearts rejoice—
  As to His presence they drew nigh—
Once more to hear His sacred voice,
  Once more to meet His gracious eye.

Thoughts, such as these, with sacred power,
  Shall cheer a night of banished rest;
And thus, thy silent solemn hour—
  Mysterious dawn—to me be blest.

When Thecla woke, the cold grey light of morn
Was faintly glimmering through the window panes;
And, as she watched it, to her mind there came
Solemn, yet soothing, thoughts of that blest morn
When Christ, so early, from the dead arose,
And to His followers sweet assurance gave
Of His triumphant victory o'er the grave.
While musing, thus,—upon her ear there stole

The thrilling sound of female voices sweet,
Chanting their morning service; and she marked
That, of the patients, many listening sat,—
As if still sensible to music's power;
Nor did she, when she breathed her soul in prayer,
Forget her sad companions to include:
Herself an outcast, now, e'en from the form
Of social life,—within St. Hermascind's,
For many weeks, she was constrained to pass
Her life 'mid this depressing atmosphere.
The Sister Winifred, who, of the ward,
Acted as matron, but few signs evinced
Of love or pity for her helpless charge:
And, though the lady mother sometimes paid
A formal visit to their domicile,
She shewed no kindly interest in their fate.
And mingled grief and indignation filled
The heart of Thecla, on discovering
That to refractory patients, who required
Restraint, much cruelty was often shewn:
For, from a ward adjoining,—where she knew
More dangerous lunatics were kept confined,—
Wild shrieks and piteous cries were sometimes heard,
Which rang, long afterwards, in Thecla's ear.
At times, the sisters and superior,
Of her soul's welfare would enquiry make:
Hoping to see her constancy give way,
'Neath daily sufferings' mind-subduing power;

And at her firm endurance wondered much.
But—nursed in affluence—the painful change
To hardship and privation, suffered now,
Told on her health, with fatal influence;
Yet, she complained not, for she knew 'twere vain;
And trusted heavenly grace would strength supply
To bear her lot, till death deliverance brought.
Nor were her thoughts entirely occupied
By her own trials, for her bosom yearned
With pity towards her fellow-prisoners;
And oft, she strove—not unsuccessfully—
To soothe and comfort those susceptible
To tender sympathy's consoling power.
She had a voice whose sweet and plaintive tones
Seemed as if formed for sacred melodies:
And oft, at their request, at evening's hour,
Would sing some chant familiar to their ear,—
But with ingenious alterations made,
And substitution of the Saviour's name
Instead of Mary's. Many listening sat,
To hear those thrilling strains, and some would weep
The tears that bring a sense of sweet relief.
It chanced that—though not of the melting mood—
The Sister Winifred to music's charms
Was not insensible, and near the door
Would sometimes linger, listening for awhile.
The prejudice she had, at first, imbibed
'Gainst Thecla had, of late, been much subdued,

And she would of her voice the praises speak
To the superior, who, she knew, took pride
In the admired singing of her choir,
On days when visitors admission gained;
And—though she knew that Thecla would not join
In parts, which to the Virgin's name addressed
Adoring worship—she was soon required
The choral service daily to attend,
And join such parts as conscience would permit;
And Thecla was not sorry, thus, to gain,
E'en that short respite from the weary hours
Passed in insanity's forlorn abode,
With no apparent prospect of release.

Return we, now, to Willoughby Bellairs,
And Catherine, who, with anxious hearts, pursued
What might have seemed an unavailing search;
But love is not repelled by obstacles,—
And Catherine could often gain access
Where Willoughby an entrance was denied.
They had but few acquaintances at Rome,
Save Catholics, whose cold and lukewarm zeal,
The lost one to discover and restore,
Became, each day, but too perceptible.
Weeks passed away, and no success appeared
Their efforts to attend, until, at length,
The sickness hope deferred so often brings,
E'en to the patient mind, stole o'er their hearts.

One evening—from a long and fruitless search—
Bellairs returned, and vainly sought repose
For many an hour; but sleep, at length, prevailed
O'er sorrow, and a transient respite brought.
Beneath its influence, he seemed to stray—
Alone, amid a solitary spot,—
And, as the evening shades began to fall,
A solemn stillness—soothing, and yet dread,—
Unbroken reigned, until he reached a grove,
When, to his ear there came a gentle sound,
Like that of leaves, by summer breezes stirred.
He paused a moment, fixed in mute surprise,
For, from an avenue of trees, emerged
The beauteous form of Thecla Brieton.
"O! Thecla," he exclaimed; "and dost thou dwell
"In this lone spot, concealed from mortal eye?"
"My dwelling-place I must not tell thee now,"
She answered, with a sweet but mournful smile,
While teardrops glistened in her starry eyes;
"But, I am come to ask thy kindly aid,
"To understand the meaning of this scroll;
"'Twas given me by a dark, mysterious form,
"Of aspect stern, and on his head a crown;
"But, ere my awe-struck lips could utterance find,
"It vanished." "I will do my best," he said.
"But tell me, dearest Thecla," he rejoined,
"When grew those quivering wings that grace thy form?

"And whence derived the soft ethereal light,
"That circles, like a halo, round thy brow."
"You ask what to myself is scarcely known,"
Was her reply; "but yet, methinks they came
"In the same hour when that unearthly form
"The scroll presented,—which, I pray thee, read,
"Without delay." He hastened to obey:
The letters were of gold,—the page exhaled
A perfume like the flowers of paradise,
And on the seal—of sparkling gems composed—
He could discern a palm branch, and a crown,
An urn surmounting; but, as on the lines
He bent an earnest glance, he woke to hear
The sound of cannon, and of music's strains;
For 'twas a general holiday at Rome,—
Observed in honour of some favourite saint,—
And as he wished to call upon a friend
Within the city, and desired to shun,
As much as possible, the crowded streets
And long processions, which such days attend,
He rose, and—though still musing on his dream
With deep emotion—to the world returned.
Meanwhile, the object of his anxious thought,
Still in captivity was doomed to pine.
The only ray of hope, that seemed to wear
The faintest hue of probability,
Rested on Antoinette; but soon, alas!
It vanished: for when of her mother's health

She made enquiry, she became informed
'Twas feared that many weeks might yet elapse,
Ere she regained sufficient energy
Her journey to pursue; but, in the charge
Of the superior of St. Hermascind's,
She had, by her confessor, been advised,
Her erring daughter's future to confide,
As one, by long experience, qualified
To judge what means were fittest to restore
The wanderer,—whether her sad lapse arose
From mind disordered or perverted heart.
"And can she be so cruel and unjust?"
Thought Thecla, "thus—by false and treacherous arts—
"To lure me to this place, and leave me there,
"To what she knows must prove a dreadful fate.
"But ah! her mind is steeled by Father Claude,
"Against what little in her breast remains
"Of womanly or tender sentiments;
"That iron-hearted bigot would not feel
"The least compunction in consigning me
"To torture, death, or life imprisonment,
"If it his Church's interests would serve.
"O! my beloved aunt, you little thought,
"When last we parted, such a fate as this
"Awaited me. O! Willoughby,—but he,
"By wedded love and social joys absorbed,
"Perchance, ne'er gives to Thecla's weal or woe

"A passing thought,—but, no! I am unjust,
"For well I know, to kindred's sacred ties
"And friendship's claim, his heart would still respond,
"And that of my sad fate, were he aware,
"He would each kind and generous effort make,
"Within his power, my rescue to effect.
"But, wherefore should my mind thus fondly yearn
"For human sympathy? O! let me lean
"Upon His faithful love who changes not."
And in this soothing thought, her troubled mind
And sinking heart sweet consolation found.

CANTO XXVIII.

UNEXPECTED INCIDENTS.

Must the cup be snatched away,
  Ere my lip its bliss hath tasted?
Must that fairest flower decay,
  Ere upon my breast I've placed it?
Cruel hope! whose treacherous ray—
Torch-like—flashed, then died away.

Art thou come to greet my sight,
  Only as a passing vision?
Like some form of sacred light,
  Sent upon a transient mission,
Which—forbid on earth to stay—
  Glides, with silent wing, away.

Soon after Thecla's last faint hope—derived
From Antoinette—had vanished into air,
The lifeless atmosphere of chilling gloom,

Which daily reigned within St. Hermascind's,
A transient change displayed, which seemed to spread
Excitement, bordering upon cheerfulness,
Through all the sisterhood,—and Thecla learned
That in the chapel of St. Hermascind's,
A lady was about to take the veil;
And that, as she was wealthy, young, and fair,
It was expected that the audience
Who came to witness it, would be composed
Of affluence, rank, and fashion's children gay.
Thecla, in silence, heard, and sighed to think
Upon the sad delusion, which, she feared,
Possessed the infatuated victim's mind;
But scarcely thought that she should be allowed
To fill her usual place within the choir
On that occasion. But the knowledge gained
By the superior, of the human heart—
At least, the female heart—made her aware
That, in romantic minds, e'en for an hour,
To be the heroine of some striking scene,
Full oft, has potent charms; she, also, thought
The imposing ceremony might awake,
In Thecla's breast, ambition's latent spark—
To emulate the bright self-sacrifice,
Which the fair postulate would then display;
So she decided Thecla should be placed
Amid the choir, who, by a curtain screen,
Of light materials formed, would be concealed,

Except as shadowy forms, although their eyes,
Through its transparent texture, would discern
Much of the passing pageant. Sooth to say,
Scarce anything was thought or talked about,
By nun or novice, but the expected rite,
Until, at length, the looked for day arrived.
The previous evening, Thecla was informed
That she would be permitted to appear.
The announcement banished slumber from her eyes
The live-long night, although it brought no hope
Of her deliverance, for she was aware
The screen would an impervious barrier prove
To recognition, should there chance to be
Among the audience relative or friend.
Yet her heart throbbed with sad conflicting thoughts,
When she the female choir accompanied,
And thought it possible that some one known
And loved, in other days, might form a part
Of the spectators. Eager visitants
The chapel crowded,—dressed in gay attire:
The solemn rite commenced, and music's strains
Their aid imparted to the striking scene,
And touched each heart, susceptive to their power,—
And Thecla's soon was raised from earth to heaven.
Daylight had been excluded, but the rays
Of numerous lamps their light diffused around,
Some faint resemblance bearing to the scene
Which St. Iago's dome exhibited,

When, 'mid its splendidly illumined walls,
Beauty and youth, the city's flower and pride,—
Lured to the idol-worship of that hour—
As immolated victims, were consumed,
(To Mary,—and the dogma just announced
By Rome,—a sacrifice.) O! fearful night,
Of terror and despair! which left a wound
Of deepest anguish in the stricken hearts
Of many a home, which time could never heal:
While feelings of indignant horror filled
Each mind—by bigotry not wholly steeled—
When it became revealed, the ruthless priests,
To save their worthless relics—valued more
Than precious souls in death's dread peril placed,—
(Perchance, for his approach but ill-prepared)
With cruel hands, upon their victims closed
The last remaining outlet of escape;
'Twas opened once, indeed, though but, alas!
To mock their agony, by telling them
That they, ere long, with Mary would be blest;
Then, on the helpless prisoners closed again,
For ever, and consigned them to their fate.
Well might the soldiers, with indignant scorn,
And bitter execrations, drive away
The ruthless monsters, when—the ensuing morn—
They came, with seared and callous hearts, to gaze
Upon the murdered sufferers' charred remains.
But from the painful subject we return,

To where, 'twas thought, a spark—though none e'er
knew
From whence elicited—might, to results
Of tragic import, somewhat similar,
Perchance, have led: for lo! a smothered cry—
Of "fire"—was heard, and Thecla, looking up,
Beheld the screen ignited! Terror seized
On those behind it placed, who, rushing forth,
Were mingled with the panic-stricken crowd
That, in confusion, towards the entrance pressed.
But, happily, assistance was at hand,
Through which, ere serious mischief had ensued,
The fire became extinguished;—but the bird
St. Hermascind had captured and designed
A life-long prisoner in its walls to hold,
Had fled her cage. While 'mid the throng concealed,
She felt a hand laid gently on her arm,
And heard a voice, in accents low, but fraught
With deep emotion, say—"And have I found
"Thee,—sought so long in vain?—O! let me be
"Thy guide, amid this dread and dangerous scene."
Trembling, she clung to his supporting arm,
As to a brother dear; for, one quick glance
Sufficed to shew 'twas Willoughby Bellairs.
And through the densely-congregated mass—
Who little thought or cared who made escape,
If but themselves were to the number joined—
They passed unnoticed to the outer gate,

At which a closed carriage waiting stood,
Where Catherine,—just arrived,—with much alarm,
Beheld the emerging crowd, but saw, with joy,
Bellairs,—though marvelling to observe a form,
In dress conventional, whom he appeared
To guide, with anxious look and hurried step;
Yet, though by suffering and by sorrow changed,
She, in the stranger, quickly recognised
Her beauteous niece. A silent fond embrace
Was all that passed, for caution more forbade,
Until the carriage wheels had carried them
Far from the convent gates: round which a crowd
Long lingered, though their aid was not required,
For soon 'twas known the fire had been subdued.
The friends soon reached a safe secluded spot;
But, scarce could Thecla realize the thought
Of her deliverance,—and, at length, o'ercome,
Upon the bosom of her aunt she wept.
The explanations, hurried and abrupt,—
Yet, full of interest to each throbbing heart,—
Fancy may picture. Much they grieved to hear
The mournful tale of Thecla's trials past,—
But O! how precious were to them the words
Which told the happy change which o'er her mind,
So wondrously, had passed, since last they met;
A change which—to the errors of that Church,
Which long had held her blindfold in its chains,—
Her eyes had opened, and enabled her

The Word Divine to make her only guide.
But ah! when joy around us seems to shed
Its brightest beams, how oft a shadowy cloud
Looms in the distance, with portentious gloom;
And, 'mid the fond emotions of delight,
That happy, unexpected meeting brought,
Bellairs, with the physician's prescient eye,
On Thecla's wasted form, and pallid cheek,
And laboured breathing, gazed with troubled thoughts;
E'en Thecla's mind, 'neath sorrow's lengthened reign,
Had lost the elastic spring, which gives it power
Sad memories and boding fears to chase;
And yet, her heart rose gratefully to heaven,
For her deliverance from so dread a fate.
"O! dearest aunt," she said, "what joy to think
"That I am rescued, and to thee restored;
"How happy should I feel, but for a strange
"Depressing sense of weakness, which, at times,
"Seems as if life's faint spark,—though glimmering still,—
"Would soon become extinct, and sink in death.
"Tell me, dear Willoughby,—for thou hast made
"The countless maladies that life destroy
"Thy study,—tell me, ought I to regard
"The fears these feelings naturally excite,
"As nervous fancies, or the harbingers
"Which death is wont to send ere his approach?"
And, as she spoke, she fixed her earnest eyes

On his, as if to read his inmost thoughts.
He started—but, recovering, tried to smile,
And was about to speak those flattering words,
So often used, delusive hopes to raise;
But truth and conscience's ever sacred laws
Forbade their utterance, and—with a pang
That spread an ashy paleness o'er his brow—
He owned her present state of health involved
Cause for alarm, then added words designed
To soothe her; but suppressed emotion gave
A pathos to his voice, that in the heart
Of Thecla—ever sensitive—awoke
The mournful chords where fear and sorrow dwell.
Yet, she was calm,—but to the window turned,
As if to gaze upon the pleasing view
Which it presented—but, in truth, to hide
A few sad tears which, all unbidden, fell:
While he stood by in silent agony,
As to his mind the memory of his dream
Returned with vivid force. "And was that dream,"
He thought, "a warning? Did those aërial wings
"Denote a soul prepared to take its flight
"From this vain world to realms where angels dwell?
"And did the letter I was to explain,
"Portend death's message, and that mine would be
"The painful task its import to unfold,
"And tell her that an early death would close—
"Most probably—her mournful history?

"O, thought of anguish! but I will not yield
"To superstition;—when that dream took place,
"My mind had been excited by the stress
"Of anxious care and torturing suspense.
"Danger exists—and, as I greatly fear,
"Of serious character,—but yet, not such
"As hope precludes. Then, let me not despair,
"But pray that He, with whom, alone, the power
"Of life and death rests ever, may avert
"What—though to grief inured—would crush my heart.
"I would be thankful that, whate'er betides,
"Her mind from Rome's dark bondage has been freed,
"And that the Convent of St. Hermascind's
"Has lost its prisoner,—to remain, I trust,
"Where I may watch, with love's unceasing care,
"O'er the dear victim of the trials borne
"With all a martyr's patient fortitude."
'Twas deemed expedient, without delay,
To quit the Papal See; but though the flight
Of Thecla, when discovered, much annoyed
The proud superior of St. Hermascind's,—
Yet, when she learned the captive had escaped
With her heretic relatives, and fled
With them to Belgium's tolerating land,—
She judged it wisest to suppress her wrath,
And silence to preserve,—except to those

Who to the plot against the hapless maid
Had been accessory. Of these was one,
Whose castles (rather cloisters) in the air
(That, with the portion of her husband's wealth
To her bequeathed, if Thecla took the veil,
Hope had been wont to build,) were now dissolved.
Her disappointment met with sympathy
From Father Claude, whose influence had fanned
The sparks of spiritual ambition raised,
Into a flame his Church would well approve.
But to the chapel we must now return,—
Where soon the alarm, so suddenly produced,
Subsided, for the danger passed away,
And many who had in the panic fled,
Returned again,—and order was restored.
The pealing organ's soul-impressive strains
Once more were heard,—the service was resumed,—
And every gazing eye was rivetted
Upon the beautiful and striking form
Of Genevieve De Tracy, as she stood,
All pale,—yet, with the calm and trance-like look
Of one to this world dead,—while those who knew
The brilliant Genevieve, in days gone by,
Could scarce believe she thus could bid farewell
To that beguiling world, by which her heart
Had once appeared entirely engrossed,
And which such flattering homage paid her then;
But that vain world its idol soon forgot.

A few short days, indeed, she formed the theme
Of many an idle tongue,—yet, sooth to say,
The comments which this unexpected step
Called forth, breathed little of the charity
Which "hopeth all things" and "no evil thinks,"—
For some surmised that she was influenced
By that ambitious vanity which seeks
Celebrity,—however dearly bought;
While others hinted—disappointed love,
Combined with jealousy's tormenting pangs,
Or those a troubled conscience with it brings,
Had been her prompters to the rash resolve.
But some expressed a charitable hope
She had been led to see the vanity
Of all the joys this empty world affords,—
And, more especially, in sorrow's hour,—
And thus been brought to turn her thoughts from
earth
To things beyond the grave. The views of such
Were nearest to the truth, for Genevieve—
Though she had sought Zatahra's gloomy cave,
With jealous wrath that thirsted for revenge,—
Was, by the scene the sable mirror shewed,
(Followed by tidings of her sister's death)
Struck to the heart. The illness which ensued,
Proved to her soul a time with mercy fraught:
A change passed o'er her mind, and she was led
The impious creed of infidelity

Sincerely to renounce, and with a heart
Repentant, to the Saviour—once disowned,
But now adored—for pardon to apply.
But having, in her early years, been trained,
By her loved mother, in the Church of Rome,
She, to its priests, for consolation sought
In her distress, and, happily, obtained
The aid of one of piety sincere,
Though clouded by the errors of his Church.
He deemed her case as one, in which a life
Passed in seclusion was to be desired,
And as her heart his counsel seconded,
She made resolve to leave this treacherous world—
Which had to her proved but a broken reed,—
And spend her days in penitence and prayer,
Within the Convent of St. Hermascind.

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